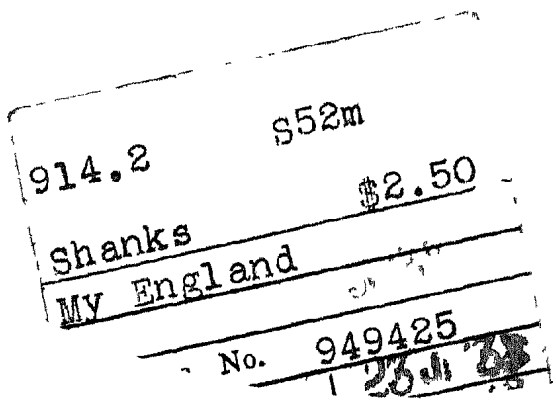

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MY ENGLAND

Philip D. Gendreau, New York.

THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT SEEN ACROSS THE THAMES

"He who sits in the House of Commons has established himself as near as anyone can get . . . to the center of our national life."

MY ENGLAND

BY

EDWARD SHANKS

Illustrated

J'engage avec mon lecteur une conversation familière; je lui soumets des idées et je le force à penser à son tour, pour me corriger et pour me compléter — GEORGES SOREL, *La Ruine du Monde Antique.*

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MY ENGLAND

PROLOGUE

Explanatory, Autobiographical and Apologetic

"I AM a typical Irishman," Mr. Shaw once said, "my family comes from Hampshire." I am a typical Englishman: my grandfather was a Lowland Scot He came to London, married a London woman and begot my father. My father married a woman whose blood was partly Cheshire and partly Westmorland and begot me. I was born in London and (this is not typical of Englishmen today) lived in the house in which I was born until my twenty-third year. I did not visit my grandfather's native country until I was thirty-seven, when I found that I liked it a great deal better than I had expected to do.

In the foregoing paragraph the word "I" occurs nine times—only once belonging to Mr. Shaw. But the insistence on the "I" is not made without deliberation. This book is called *My England,* and, if the reader is to make any sense of it, he must know from what point of view it is written. I begin as I mean to go on. The word "I" will recur a good many times in the succeeding pages. But you must understand it as being used by an Englishman who happens to be an individ-

ual named Edward Shanks, with the heredity that has been described and his own peculiarities of temperament and experience. To those readers who persevere it will presently become obvious why I have insisted on the origins of my family.

What follows I should like to be allowed to describe as an impersonal autobiography. I mean an autobiography in which as much emphasis as possible is placed on things seen and as little as possible on the person who has seen them. It is in effect (indeed, it is hard to see what else it could be) the written result of forty-odd years partly spent in trying to present to myself in an understandable form the country and the community to which I belong. Forty years is not a long time (nor would be sixty or eighty) in which to form an idea of a country and a community which have been living and changing for more than twenty centuries. It is like traveling through a strange landscape in a fast train—"Surely there's snow on those mountains"—"I think it's only the light"—"That's a castle over there"—"No, it was a queer-shaped rock" The effect which has excited your attention is gone before you can grasp it and you may never see it in the same light or from the same angle again.

I endeavor to write here in that spirit, rather awed, I must admit, and humiliated by my task. This "I" is Edward Shanks, to be sure, but he does not write in the first person singular because he thinks himself to be the finally judging voice of God. He does it from a desire to be as honest

as possible. The strictly impersonal method of writing is honest only where the author is writing about matters of fact and does know the facts. Elsewhere it is dishonest, because it conveys an effect of authority where no authority is. If Euclid had written: "*I* think that the angles of a triangle together make two right angles," he would have been wasting space by calling attention to himself unnecessarily. But when I say, as it is possible that I presently shall: "If I had to make a choice between the cheeses of England and the cheeses of all the rest of the world, I should choose the cheeses of England"—when I say that I do not *unnecessarily* call attention to myself. I remind you that this is an individual offering an opinion. I remind you too, I hope, that it is for you to form your own opinion, as best you can, of this individual's qualifications for giving an opinion.

You now know the individual's ancestry. He—no, *I* was a Londoner born and I spent my early years in a district which was largely open fields a year or two before my birth and which was already declining into crowded shabbiness before I reached my majority. I was sent to a local school, then to a preparatory school in the country and then to a public school—a day-school in the City. It was just before this last change that I began to be conscious of something to be known as England that might possibly be of interest to me. I had a long and severe illness, with a convalescence that spanned spring and early summer. Much of the

time I spent lying on a long chair in the garden of my father's house. That house and the others round it had been built, seventy or eighty years before, on the site of an old orchard, many of the trees of which still survived. Most of them were pear trees, overgrown mountains of blossom producing little in the way of fruit. There *had* been a cherry tree, but a small friend and I, swinging on it some years earlier, had dismayed ourselves by bringing it down. There was still a plum tree. We had a chestnut and two magnificent acacias, and some of the neighbors rejoiced in hawthorns and laburnums. On the other side of the house there was no road, only a footway and the New River, with more gardens beyond it. Looking through the high railings (put up after I was born, because a woman had tried to commit suicide there) one could see all sorts of fish, roach and perch and pike. It was a family story that some grubby urchins passing by the river had all been clustered at the railings by the ecstatic shout of one of them—"I siy! I siy! Look at these 'addicks!"

(There was another family story, about an escaped elephant that wandered along this improbable route, but I have never been quite sure that I have it right)

This was the first of England that I saw, this still beflowered corner of a degenerating suburb, and I saw it as suddenly, when I was fourteen years old, as a kitten must see the edge of the basket when its eyes open. My two years at school

in the country had left no comparable impression on my mind. I remember a hay field where I suffered my first agonizing and bewildering attack of hay fever. I remember an almond tree with the unripe nuts of which we used to try to make ourselves ill—but I do not remember ever noticing that tree in bloom. Later, when I had recovered and went to the school in the City, my vision was still enchanted and I rejoiced in everything I saw, even the dingy shops and houses in the Goswell Road

And I began then to write, in a beautiful new notebook which cost me sixpence, a great work called *London A Poem in Twelve Books.* For, at the same time as I discovered the beauty of the scene around me, I discovered literature also and began to read, with the main unconscious purpose of learning what impression it had made on others. It was lucky for me, I still think, that my Byron, the traditional starting point, was discouragingly printed on atrocious paper, and that I started, by some accident, to read Browning a little before I stumbled on Keats and Shelley.

From that point on, my experience of England has been a never-ending extension in space and time. Fortunately it is an extension which need never have an end. Even if one had seen every town and village in the country, there would still be a thousand that one would like to look at again. And English history develops as one watches it, apart from what there is still to learn from what is already recorded. Only the other day at

Fowey, in Cornwall, excavators found, on a site reputed to be that of King Mark's Castle, remains of a large building, apparently of post-Roman times, and an inscription referring to one Drusdagnus—who sounds amazingly and excitingly like Tristram. What one may call the spade of the mind goes on turning over the drifted soil of recorded evidence, and fact after fact is sorted into its place until we begin to understand things which yesterday were mysteries or, much worse still, explained with false simplicity.

This is what is done by the whole community that is engaged in historical research. The individual goes on digging in his own way, trips about the country by car or train or bus, climbs a hill here or goes to a football match there, and in the intervals reads a book or two. There are three things which inevitably keep on changing all the time: what is recorded of England, what I myself know of England, and England herself.

I have a cinema projector which has one advantage over those used in the expensive picture theaters: you can throw a switch and produce a "still" when you choose. In one of my films there is a sequence showing my wife eating bacon and eggs, cooked by herself, on a hillside in Sussex. That sequence is pretty good and generally gets a laugh. But the great thing is to throw over the switch at the right moment and show her with a forkful half-way into her mouth. That brings the house down, but it depends on throwing the

switch over at precisely the right moment. So here—I am trying to shoot a bird on the wing

I might use another image from photography. This is an aerial picture of England made during a necessarily hurried flight. Parts of the landscape will be blurred or completely hidden by the clouds of my ignorance or my neglect.

Let me add one last warning. It is very easy to say that "the English do this and this" when you are stating a proposition that applies to all mankind. I shall try throughout 300 pages to avoid this danger, but I beg my readers to be on their guard against it and to forgive me if they find that I have slipped. And is it necessary to say that, by the time I have finished, I shall be bitterly reviling myself for all the things I have forgotten to mention?

I

The Making of a Country

THIS England is like a very old house into which all of us, the occupants, however deeply impregnated we may be with tradition, have only recently moved. What sort of house it is was described by Charles Kingsley in *The Water Babies,* when he said of the mansion of Sir John Harthover:

> For the attics were Anglo-Saxon.
> The third floor Norman.
> The second Cinquecento
> The first floor Elizabethan.
> The right wing pure Doric.
> The center Early English, with a huge portico copied from the Parthenon.
> The left wing pure Bœotian, which the country folk admired most of all, because it was just like the new barracks in the town, only three times as big.
> The grand staircase was copied from the Catacombs at Rome.
> The back staircase from the Taj Mahal at Agra. This was built by Sir John's great-great-great-uncle, who won, in Lord Clive's Indian Wars, plenty of money, plenty of wounds, and no more taste than his betters.
> The cellars were copied from the caves of Elephanta.
> The offices from the Pavilion at Brighton.

But even that hotchpotch is not comprehensive enough. It ought to include a prehistoric earthwork, a stone circle and a Roman villa. And today perhaps there stands on the site (or may tomorrow) a concrete house with a flat roof, windows at all the corners, and an interior like a cocktail bar. If so, maybe Sir John Harthover's successors in occupation have kept a fragment of the old, perhaps of the oldest structure, since, in spite of the violent changes in our history, we have a liking for a reasonable degree of continuity.

It would not indeed be surprising to learn that such a house, or a house nearly like it, does somewhere exist. Many of our buildings now in active use span enormous stretches of time. Years ago, when I was a boy, I was idling with a book near the sea wall of an Essex estuary, sitting, to be precise, on the grass outside an old barn with my back against its wall. Suddenly, I do not know how, I became aware that the lower courses of the wall against which I was leaning contained several specimens of the authentic, long, biscuit-like Roman brick. Immensely thrilled, I made inquiries in the nearest village, but could find no more than a vague belief, entertained by some and repudiated by others, that the barn had once been a church. For all I could gather, that might have been no more than a century or two before, and in my youthful sapience I dismissed it as merely a clumsy rustic effort to explain the peculiar brickwork. And then, half a generation later, I happened to hear that my barn had, after sound

antiquarian research, been reconsecrated as St. Peter's-on-the-Wall and was reputed to be the oldest church in England, dating back to comparatively early Roman times. That was another thrill. I have been there since to look at it and found it (as might not have happened) no less stimulating to the imagination in its restored condition than it was as a tumbledown barn. To me that is one of our holiest places.

But it was long before the Romans came that man began to build and then to alter and rebuild and generally transmogrify the house that is England Eoanthropus, who may have been an orang but was probably a man, though he would have looked more like an orang to us, had taken up residence in Sussex (just like a modern author) in the Pleistocene and must have made some difference to the appearance of the country.

This was no doubt a modest beginning, but nature was busy afterwards, dividing the Island from the Continent, giving the Thames a sea to flow into instead of the Rhine and making various changes in the climate. There have been other changes in our climate since man began to be really busy here. Thus, some four thousand years ago, a deficiency of water drove from the chalk downs of the South the people who were already leaving their marks on those noble hills by establishing there what has been described as almost an urban civilization.

These early millennia are a tangle of confused and superimposed clues. It takes a detective to

say what each clue means and which are earlier and which later—and the detectives do not always agree. The important thing is that, for thousands of years before anything that can be called history begins, man was at work on the face of England, making marks which endure to this day and, perhaps, leaving blood which endures no less. Here then is a background, however confused and faint, which is an essential part of England as we know her. You can see the beginnings of our country in those hill fortresses of the chalk downs which have been so finely praised for their sheer beauty by Mr. H. J. Massingham.[1] "These high-thoughted camps" he calls them, and I can find no better expression of their nobility than what he says of Oldbury:

> Every one of the great camps of Southern England wears its own special atmosphere, and rugged Oldbury with its wrinkled brow is no exception. In the jargon of military archeology, it is a "contour fort" and its massively irregular lines, in places fifty feet high from their fosses and enclosing a hard-delved area of twenty-five acres, "humor," in Colt-Hoare's happier speech, "the hill in its numerous sinuosities." But its relationship with the Down goes one better than this. Walk along the southern rampart, look down the long slopes, and the hill will appear to have been designed to bear this earthen roc's nest upon its crown. For the land descends in a parallel series of great buttresses with

[1] Especially in *Downland Man*, London, 1927 Mr Massingham, who believes in the peacefulness of early man, does not like to think of them as fortresses.

a trivial white horse carved at the end of the eighteenth century along the side of one, and two banks of terraces dipping and flowing over the foot of another. Nothing could be more beautiful than the set and sweep of these buttresses clasping the lower ground with such firmness and soaring up the steep slopes to make a kind of tripod to support the open bowl of earthenware.

To me the best of them all is Maiden Castle, which provides a thought-provoking parallel to my Roman church in Essex. It crowns a windy and deserted hill in Dorset. You can get quite close to it in a car if you do not mind driving over short grass. When I did this, I saw, first of all, the blue and white notice-board announcing that the National Trust is in charge—which is evidence of good work well done, but still a pity—and then a flock of sheep being driven out through the western entrance so that the white of their wool outlined its complicated military architecture (than which, I am persuaded, Vauban himself never did anything better) as the bismuth meal outlines to the X-ray the interior of the human body. So, it was impossible to help thinking, must they have been driven out again after being taken in for safety during one of the never-to-be-recorded wars or raids of the days before the Romans were even a menace.

That spectacle took the beholder back a long time. But the span covered by Maiden Castle had already exceeded that of St. Peter's-on-the-Wall at a time when St. Peter's-on-the-Wall was a raw,

new building, regarded perhaps by the more conservative neighbors as the sort of thing that a lot of vulgar Christians might be expected to put up. The Castle, according to Dr. R. E M. Wheeler, whose excavations there have added so much to our knowledge, was inhabited four thousand years ago by a Neolithic tribe which "grew wheat, wore cloth, and even carried on something of a rudimentary trade." These people, who came from somewhere, were succeeded for a short time by others from somewhere else. Then occurred the change in the climate which drove man from the heights to the river bottoms, and the Castle ceased to be a place of habitation for a period as long as that which has elapsed between the withdrawal of the Roman Legions and the present day. But the climate changed again and once more the hilltop was occupied and the vast works were built which now we can see. It may have been deserted again when the Romans established their city at Dorchester. But, not long before the Romans left (when the bricks of St. Peter's-on-the-Wall were beginning to be a little weathered) someone built on the old site a temple to Diana—a reconsecration of those days.[1]

You may take either the Church or the Castle as a general emblem of England—an emblem

[1] Since I wrote this, more discoveries have been made One of them is that at one period in its long history Maiden Castle suffered from overcrowding Some of its pit-dwelling inhabitants were driven into far from eligible neighborhoods They dug, that is to say, pits in soil which must have made them very uncomfortable to live in. Slums of the Neolithic!

which can be found in particular in hundreds of old houses, even to the point of their having been deserted for a time or only inhabited, as to a corner, by some laborer's family. What has been destroyed makes an emblem too. There is, for example, the stone circle of Avebury which was large enough to have a village inside it and, in the eighteenth century, was destroyed by two farmers of that village, named Green and Robinson. We now guess at what Avebury was like, partly from the traces which even its destroyers could not quite obliterate and partly from what is said by those who saw it before they got to work. Aubrey said that it was "a monument the greatest, most considerable and least ruinated of any of this kind in our British isle." He goes on to say that "this old monument does as much exceed in greatness the so renowned Stonehenge, as a cathedral doeth a parish church." Now Avebury is fewer than twenty miles away from Stonehenge and no further away than Stonehenge from a main road. So why did Aubrey, who said this before Robinson and Green had ruinated it, need to crack it up so much against the "so renowned Stonehenge"?

It will be admitted that there are certain parish churches which are superior to certain cathedrals. Perhaps it was something more than chance which preserved for us the smaller but better example of that period in our monument-making. At a guess—in the circumstances one can only guess—I should say that Stonehenge got its renown by

being better sited than Avebury, where the mere desire to spread imposed on the builders a less suitable stretch of ground. It would be possible to argue that Avebury represented the decadence of a culture of which Stonehenge was the highest point. I say that mainly for the purpose of adding at once that such arguments, if seriously pursued, are rather absurd. We do not know what manner of men built Avebury and Stonehenge, or for what purposes they built them. Until archeological technique is improved in some unimaginable way we shall have no means of knowing. What we do know is that they were men who left indelible marks on our country, not only in their monuments but in what they did to subdue the land to their own use and the use of those who have come after them. Everywhere now the handiwork of these men is coming to light, often by observation from the air, which can discover evidence of disturbance of the soil hidden from investigators who go about on foot. Besides building hill fortresses and stone circles they cut terraces in the steep sides of the downs where they could grow their crops. There are plenty of those to be seen within easy distance of Brighton, where they are not obscured by new villas—the residents in which, it must be said, are also growing their own crops in their own way. And we may take it that all these former occupants of our house—including Eoanthropus of Piltdown himself—left behind them not only

traces of the furrows they so crudely drove in the land, but also drops of their blood in our veins. We are a mixed lot, and I feel that I should apologize for having come south, in the germ-plasm, to add my imperceptible quota of genes to the mixture.

* * *

One thing is certain, which is that, for some centuries before the coming of the Romans, the process of mixing went on at an ever faster pace. There was turmoil then throughout all Western Europe, possibly occasioned by some climatic change of which we have no more conclusive evidence than a cataclysmic movement of peoples. It does seem that the barbaric or semi-barbaric tribes of Gaul and Germany began now to multiply and to be restless, having before been kept few and peaceful by hardship. That whirlpool threw a number of jets of spray across the formidable gulf offered by the Channel, which the Romans crossed in a less haphazard manner. (It should be remembered that a good many of the natives whom the Romans conquered rather ruthlessly had themselves been conquerors, and certainly no more ruthful, not long before.)

There are two dates in our history never forgotten by anyone who has ever been to school. To the second we shall come later, but the first is 55 B C. Cæsar, after that invasion, went away and returned and went away again. It was nearly a century before one of his successors undertook a real conquest. But conquest had long before

become inevitable. England had by that time become a tempting demesne.

It is obviously absurd to say that the effort of Claudius was undertaken in order to round off a defensive frontier. Julius may have been, during his brilliant war of improvisation in Gaul, obliged to frighten here the friends of his enemies on the other side of the Channel. But Gaul was soon enough, and thoroughly enough, incorporated in the Empire to remove any such necessity. The Channel would have made a far easier frontier than any of those that were substituted for it on our side. The initial conquest was a considerable affair. The western parts of the island gave a great deal of trouble. For a long time the danger of revolts remained. The problem of a defensive frontier, so far from being solved, became more urgent than ever and could not have been completely solved without the conquest of Ireland and the Highlands. Later on, Britain became, apart from the difficulty of holding the Wall, a plentiful source of embarrassment to the central government of the Empire. Generals and legions stationed in Britain seemed to develop a feeling that they could beat the world and, though they were often wrong, they were always liable to be a nuisance.

What brought the Romans to Britain was the belief that here was a potential province to be exploited. It is a productive island. There was, for example, tin. The Dingdong Mine, near Penzance, was in operation long before the Ro-

mans could have dreamt of coming here. It is now as desolate a place as any you will find in this Kingdom, standing on a wide, sweet, gorse-covered moorland, where you might sit a whole day without seeing another human being. But I have had the good luck to know well an old man, named Cap'n Dick Berryman, who was once employed in that mine. There was lead, too, in the Mendips and gold in Wales. I do not believe in those celebrated British oysters. It is unlikely that there were really any pearls in them, and while, as *hors d'œuvres,* they may have rejoiced the men on the spot, it is equally unlikely that they could have been carried in good condition to the men in Rome who were responsible for the conquest. But there was always wheat, and that was a need from which the Empire could never escape. Britain was a country which man had already harnessed to the purposes of production.

Our own modern civilization has experienced no temptation comparable to this since Spain plundered once and for all the wealth of the New World and the Nabobs found opportunities of making smaller but sizable fortunes in India. The Roman was drawn to a land where something had already been begun and the possibilities proved. He came, if I may so put it, whooping into Britain, as already into Gaul, and soon showed that he had whooped to good purpose. In the long run the Empire might have been better off without Britain, but before that had been proved there were many thousands of citizens of the Em-

pire for whom Britain had been a good investment.

These citizens also left their mark on our country. It would be hard to drive for an hour in a car through England without coming near one of their enduring traces. They built cities with baths and amphitheaters. They built country houses, like the villa at Bignor with its vivid mosaics and its system of central heating which cannot have been equaled in that part of Sussex for eighteen centuries or more—is not, indeed, approached in some of its hotels today. But, in a curious way, they failed to impress themselves on the great territory Rome had conquered. Most of the roads which we call "Roman" are simply improved versions, straightened here and there, engineered at various points, of the roads which existed before their coming. There is only one Roman road of which one can say with any approach to certainty that the Romans made it where no road was before That is the Stane Street which runs from Chichester across the Downs and the Weald to London Bridge. It is a relatively short stretch, but what a mark it has made across England and what a reminder it is, to the wandering Englishman who sees it, of the depths of his past!

And of the interruptions of his past! As we have seen, there were interruptions in prehistoric times of which we know little more than that they occurred. But anyone who cares to stand

beside the Stane Street, a mile or so north of the Nore Wood, at Gumber Corner, say, can see a living witness to an astonishing gap which occurred after our written history began. The Stane Street was built in order that Roman troops might, when required, be brought from the Continent to Chichester Harbor and marched thence to London by a route as direct as possible. This was the prime object of the road. But, and increasingly as the island became more peaceful, it served other purposes and carried a great deal of the traffic of the island. It was probably, by its directness, a real help to trade. But for at least fourteen centuries no one has followed the whole of its line except with an antiquarian purpose. From Gumber Corner you can see a raised bank running over the crest of the Downs as though it had been drawn with a ruler. It is covered with brambles and other bushes. Here and there it has been leveled to the ground so that men and beasts may go from one field to the next. There is some reason for thinking that it may have been used as a defensive earthwork during the obscure wars of the time which followed the collapse of Roman rule.

But what must first strike the observer is that this was once what we should now call an arterial road, engineered with skill and at much cost of labor, for the best sort of transport that the Roman civilization could command. Then the Roman civilization withered and died in Britain.

The Stane Street was cut, two or three miles north of Chichester, just where it begins to rise into the Downs The Nore Wood marks the point where the interruption was made. But the road was not thus severed simply because the wood sprang up. The wood sprang up because it was allowed to, because disuse had cut the road, and it was allowed to spring up in days when no horizon spread over the Downs into the Weald. No man could see farther than the next village or, rather, the next settlement or, to put it better than that, the next huddling together of survivors. The men of those dark days had no use for a straight line from Chichester to Bignor and thence to London; there was no reason in their lives why they should go from Chichester to Bignor, let alone to London. The road turned aside, becoming a track, to reach the next village in the easiest way.

So much we can guess from the scanty evidence that has been left. And all this happened in a country which for some centuries had been as peaceful, as well-settled and as prosperous as it was not to be again until the eighteenth century.

There is more to be guessed, but it is necessary to realize that it *is* only guesswork. Uriconium was a decent-sized little town on the Severn under the shadow of the Wrekin. Wroxeter today is a very small village, perhaps more properly to be called a hamlet, lying, like the shrunken kernel of a nut, among the mounds which are all that remain of

the Roman town. Some years ago I passed that way and found a party of archeologists digging on the site of the marketplace. They had discovered to their immense gratification a collection of pottery, some of it broken, but with all the pieces in place, which they could not interpret save as the display outside a shop. It would appear that the natives of Uriconium one day, after the potter had set out his wares in the morning, simply took to their heels and went—where? All over the country things like that happened. It was not a question of the dwindling of centers of population. If anyone had been left living in or near Uriconium the potter's stock would not have been left untouched. Nor does it seem like a question of a raid from the neighboring Welsh hills in which all the inhabitants of Uriconium were put to the sword—that, too, must have led to some disturbance of the pottery. There may have been some threatened raid before the approach of which they fled in good time. Or there may have been a pestilence. All we know is that these people went away very suddenly and that no one took their places.

Traces of this gigantic and probably long-drawn-out disaster are to be seen all over the country, and wherever they are encountered they powerfully affect the imagination. I will quote one more instance, that of the famous villa at Bignor which I have already mentioned. In the year 1811 a plowshare which was being driven across a field in West Sussex struck something hard

which was larger than the flints of that soil.[1] It was part of the remains of a villa which had obviously belonged to a man of considerable wealth and importance. An enlightened farmer (whose name, Tupper, should be held in grateful memory) had the site carefully dug and then built shelters to preserve what had been found. If you pause today, as you go along one of the minor roads under the Downs, and will walk a couple of hundred yards through a wheatfield, you can see the fountain in the entrance hall, some courses of the walls, many of the roofing tiles, and the open-air swimming pool, of what was once an extremely elegant country residence. Some of the mosaics, damaged only by the collapse of the roof upon them, are still brilliantly graceful. In the walls and floors there are still fragments of the pipes for a hot-air system which must have made the villa quite comfortable even in the sort of winter that is to be expected under the Downs. It was evidently at some time deserted and, though part of the materials may have been carried off for building elsewhere, this did not happen until the roof had had time to fall in.

Here then are a few visible symbols of that mysterious period during which Britain changed into England, the period which has been called "the reign of King Arthur." Historians have taken

[1] The year, which falls within the period of the Napoleonic Wars, when all over the country much pasture land was being broken up for grain, suggests why the discovery was not made before. Soil must have been accumulating uninterruptedly over the villa ever since the roof fell in.

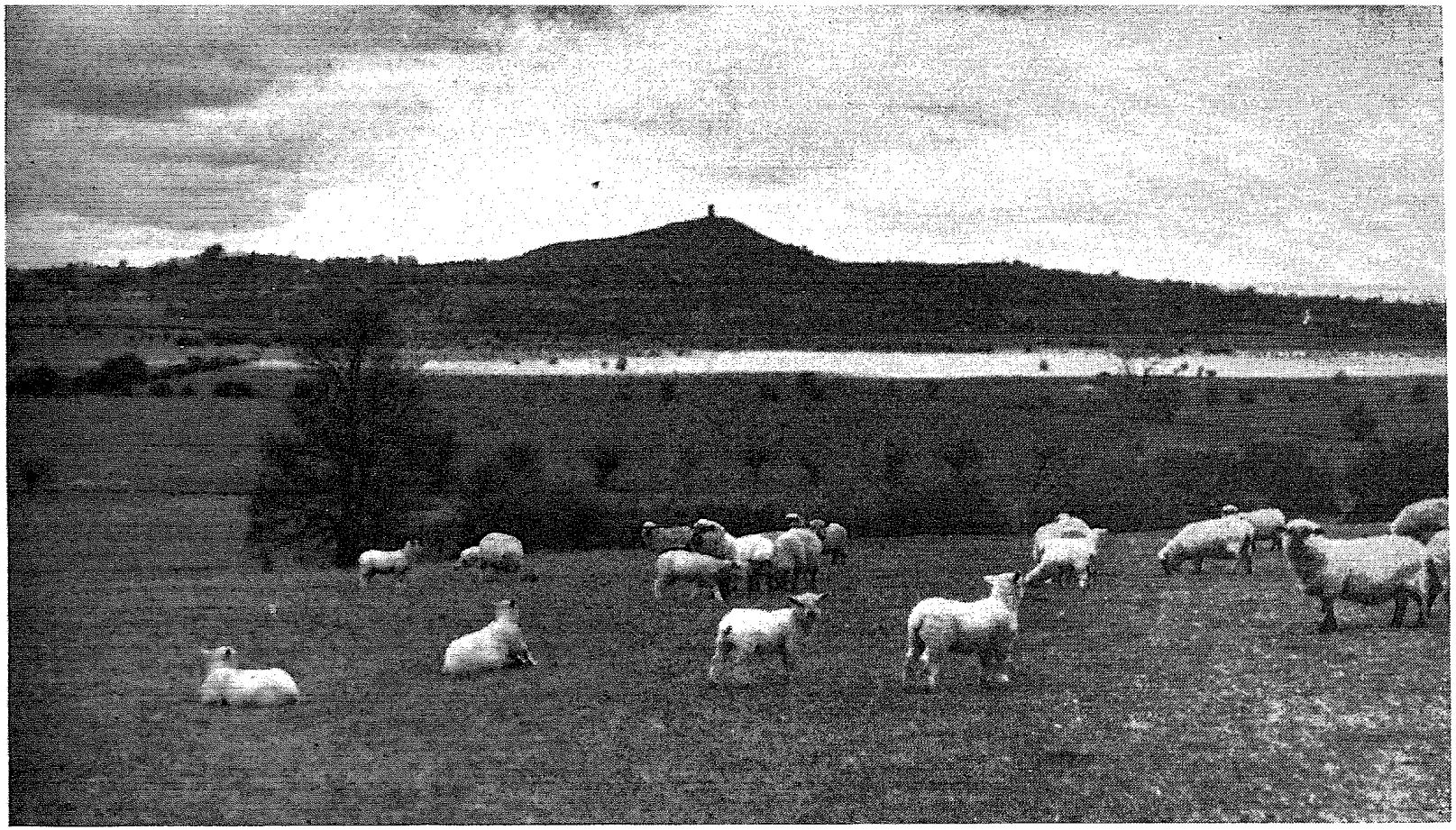
various views of its character. The conventional view, taught until recently with assurance in school textbooks, was that the virile Angles, Saxons, and Jutes migrated across the North Sea in sufficient numbers to drive such of the original inhabitants as they did not destroy to the extreme western parts of the island. It is, however, argued with more plausibility that the maritime resources of the invaders could never have been equal to the transference of whole populations, and that they must have imposed themselves as a small ruling caste on the existing Romano-British community, imposing on it, somehow, their language at the same time.

To me it seems likely that the truth lies somewhere between these two views. I am prepared to admit that the invaders were few in numbers, but all the scanty evidence goes to suggest that the earlier inhabitants were by that time equally few. We have no means of telling what happened to them after the withdrawal of the Legions. There is reason for supposing that, on one provocation or another, they abandoned towns which had been flourishing for two or three centuries. Raids from all sides reduced them, disease played its part, and the headlong deterioration of the social system under which they had lived securely so long must have interfered with the birth rate. Centers of population survived. The life of London was never interrupted, and at Anderida (which we now call Pevensey) a desperate resistance was offered to the newcomers. But the

Courtesy "Victoria History of the Counties of England."

FIGURE OF WINTER FROM THE ROMAN VILLA AT BIGNOR

"Soil must have been accumulating uninterruptedly over the villa ever since the roof fell in."



Exclusive News Agency, Rochampton.

GLASTONBURY TOR

"For a moment I had a heart-stopping feeling that I was coming to a very sacred place."

diminished population, withdrawing into these centers, tended more and more to establish themselves in the West where they were less harried by the invaders from oversea. The etymology of our place-names conjures up a vivid picture of new settlers advancing almost timidly across a deserted land. They called their villages by their own kin-names, the home of the Tillings, or after natural features, the Place of the Hazel Thicket. Thus did the first settlers in the empty continent of America call their towns White Falls or Red Bluffs, or, after the leading family among them, Jonesville. The Romano-Britons had been brought down to a residue, the invaders were no more than scanty war bands of adventurous and land-hungry young men. The process was one of some fighting, of increasing cooperation and intermingling, and, at first, of a frequent and easy avoidance of contact. But this more than half-deserted land was the marriage bed on which our race was begotten.

The Romano-Britons were already an extremely mixed race. Even before the Roman Conquest, invasions from the Continent, as I have said, had been frequent, and there was nothing like a pure homogeneous blood here when Cæsar came. Roman rule stirred many new ingredients into the mixture. Rome accumulated slaves from anywhere and everywhere and rapidly passed their descendants into the mass of the free population. The Legions went, as military reasons required, from one frontier of the Empire to another and left

their traces behind them even when their members did not remain as time-expired men. Any one of us may number among his ancestors the Egyptian soothsayer of Cleopatra, a Carthaginian cook, and one of the litter-bearers whom Catullus's friend brought back to Rome from Bithynia.

The population existing at the time of the withdrawal of the Legions was sifted by the rigors that ensued. Roman gentlemen of adaptability, strong will and some military talent met the new conditions and set themselves up as local chieftains, either driving off the intruders or coming to some kind of working compromise with them. There were, no doubt, others than gentlemen, private soldiers and slaves, perhaps, who found in disturbed conditions their own capacity for leadership. And the country itself inevitably began to take a hand. It has never been the sort of country to be long sparsely inhabited. A new civilization began to grow among the ruins, crude at first, but full of life. The names of some of the early "Saxon" kings, such as Penda of Mercia, tell us that earlier influences survived well into the days of the Heptarchy. But the amalgam of races continued to establish itself. In the West it reached certain limits beyond which it could not go. The Cornish still speak of England as a country that lies on the other side of the Tamar, and it is not much more than accident that brings them formally within the scope of the present writing.

In the East new blood tended to predominate, and naturally, since the Romano-British survivors

would withdraw from those districts which were most exposed to the early raids. But, while what we know shows an "Anglo-Saxon advance" from East to West, it is a mistake to think of it in terms of military conquest. There were conquests, plenty of them, and bloody ones, here and there. But in general it was a process like that of the mixing of gases in a closed chamber. The natural law which all these people followed was dictated by their common desire to make the best of England's resources. They met, fought more or less, mixed more or less, settled down, tilled the soil and, above all, multiplied. It is obvious that within two or three generations of the collapse of Roman rule the younger and more adaptable of the natives would have begun to approximate to the simple and adventurous type of the invaders. We can well imagine that in innumerable instances, after a brush or two, they were able to combine for the subjugation of what had become, for both sides, virtually virgin country.

There have been later additions. The second date in our history is A.D. 1066. The Norman aristocracy, repeatedly reinforced and refreshed by the still non-national aristocracy of Western Europe and all its dependents, provided a new element But this was the last immigration of anything like numerical importance. There were (as history books never fail to remind us) the Huguenots. For most of the time there have been the Jews. During several revolutionary periods the Continent has sent us various useful strains—

of whom the Rossettis may serve as an example.

But, for all practical purposes, the foundations of what is now the English race were laid when the scanty remnants of the Romans began to mix with the equally scanty invaders from over the North Sea. And that mixing was conditioned by what the Romans had done here in some three centuries of occupation before the cataclysm. What happened before their coming has left traces which are still full of a peculiar magic. If you walk over Nine Barrow Down, for example, which stands above Poole Harbor, you must feel the enchantment of the knowledge that here, to this very turf, came an ancient people to bury chieftains who were more to them than Kitchener and Haig, Wellington and Nelson are to us. Or at Upper Stanton Drew you can see the village washing hung out to air on the stones of the great circle there and you can bemuse yourself with wondering what sort of men they were who made the circle, and why they did it, and what sort of lives they led.

But, for all that, my vision of England begins with the reign of King Arthur. It was then that we began to exist. It is an age of legend, of maddeningly fragmentary knowledge and of exciting guesses. What Arthur was really like we shall never know. We can be sure, however, that he did exist and that he was a warrior and ruler of outstanding ability.

Let us suppose, for the sake of making it as

vivid as we can, that the first of his line was a legionary from Illyria, who arrived in Britain somewhere about the year A.D. 250, who was rewarded with a modest grant of land at the end of his service and married a woman of the country —who may, of course, have been begotten on a slave by a transitory official, who himself was born in Carthage or Egypt. Our legionary and his children rose in the world and, toward A.D. 400, Arthur's grandfather was a considerable landowner and a local magnate, somewhere, perhaps, on the border of Wiltshire and Somerset. His importance was greater than that of his father because within the space of a generation the grip of the central government had sensibly weakened and administration was coming more and more to depend on the assistance of local powers.

In the year 410 the last of the Legions were withdrawn by a general who commanded in Britain and had made up his mind for an attempt at the whole Empire. What that means in detail it is impossible to say. We cannot tell how a modern newspaper would have presented the events and the official *communiqués* which led up to it and followed it.[1] Presumably the Imperial offi-

[1] A friend who did me the kindness of reading these pages penciled here the words, "Or can we?" Perhaps we can I suggest the following extract from an official statement issued by the Press Officer at the would-be Imperial Headquarters of the would-be Emperor, who took the Legions away· "The situation in Gaul continues to improve. In Britain all is quiet, and no cause for anxiety is likely to arise in that quarter Our cause will triumph" But the cause failed and the Legions never returned and the troubles began on the Wall

cials did their best to carry on as though nothing had happened, hoping for the best. Probably Arthur's grandfather reflected that things would last his time.[1] He was at any rate some distance from the most exposed parts of the country and he would know how to guard his own. He made some arrangements for this purpose, choosing the toughest of his tenants and slaves as men who could be given arms in case of necessity.

Arthur's father lived in a world that was chang-

[1] After I had written these pages, I had the good fortune to read Mr. Stanley Casson's fascinating, if not encouraging, *Progress and Catastrophe,* in which an attempt is made to visualize the life of these times I hope my old schoolfellow will not grudge my appropriation here of part of his vivid picture He describes a Romano-British squire entertaining a friend at dinner· "I am sorry," says our landed gentleman to his friend, "that all I can offer you to drink is this atrocious stuff made in northern Gaul and miscalled wine! My wine merchant tells me that he can no longer get shipments of real Falernian and Samian, either they have had a few bad seasons with their vines or the ship merchants have sent their ships on a new venture and find these long-distance cargoes not worth while And *how* expensive these Roman silks are nowadays. Why, in my father's time you could buy a dinner cloak for a quarter of what one pays now, and even then get better color and better material!" And our friend did not know, for no one had told him, that the outside world had almost perished, that every land was drawing into itself in fear, and that overseas trade was a luxury that piracy and poverty had almost destroyed. . . Let us look again at our British landowner a few years later. "I hear," he says at another dinner party in his villa to a similar friend, "that Paulinus in Gloucestershire is selling his place, or at least trying to, and going to live in Gaul. But he tells me that the agents have been trying now for three years to find a buyer and there is no one. Paulinus tells me that, all the same, he will go and leave the estate in the agents' hands" Three years later the mansion of Paulinus, neglected and abandoned, begins to fall into ruin. . . . Mr. Casson's Romano-British squire, who, for whatever reason, determined to make the best of things where he was, may have been Arthur's grandfather.

ing at a headlong pace. There was no longer any security anywhere. The never completely subdued Welsh had realized that now there were no organized forces to subdue them. One was always hearing of pirate raids and sometimes they came uncomfortably near. News was scarce and unreliable. Communications were unsafe. Arthur's grandfather had once, as part of his education, spent a year in Rome, but Arthur's father would have had to lead something like a military expedition to get as far as Chichester Harbor. Behind all this there were the stories of the savages from the North Sea who, so it seemed, were no longer raiding and going away again, but settling and moving steadily westwards. Some said that they killed and ate all the native inhabitants whom they encountered. Others, however, said they were marrying the native women and that these unions were proving amazingly fruitful.

We must skip a few years and see Arthur himself as one of those miracles that any line is liable at any moment to throw up. No doubt there were numbers of Romano-British magnates all over the country playing the same part to the best of their abilities, all of them leading and inspiring bands of warriors which had originated in the armed farm-hands of their grandfathers. But somehow Arthur was more of a leader than any one of them, and the men who fought under him took on a special quality. They did, perhaps, fight only a delaying action. There may be historical truth in the legend which tells of the breaking-up of

the Round Table in defeat and disaster—though it may also, as legends do, concentrate the tale of three generations into a single episode. But there is certainly historical truth in at least one of Malory's sentences, describing the time before Arthur became King: "Then stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king." A country more sparsely inhabited, perhaps, than it had been before the coming of the Romans, and possibly with even more imperfect communications, had fallen into a thousand pieces, each with its little king, or, as he might be more accurately described, its local boss. Mr. Wells has described such chieftains as they may exist in the future—and so has Mr. John Collier in that admirably English book, *Tom's A-cold*. We can be sure that they did exist in the past. The degenerate culture they represented had lost most of what the Romans brought and had revived not much, though something, of pre-Roman Britain. They might have been annihilated piecemeal by the invaders if no center of resistance had been created.

The legend of Arthur tells us beyond mistaking that such a center was in fact created. His heroic function was to establish the claim of the Romano-British people to a share in the new nationality now coming into existence on the soil of what was later to be known as England. That is why the legend has always haunted the imagination of

Englishmen. Tennyson was not the first poet to consider it as a subject for a great poem; Milton included it in the list of possible themes from which he eventually chose *Paradise Lost.*

And as Arthur haunts our imagination, so do he and the things for which he stands haunt our countryside. England is not merely a land with an immense and echoing past; she is also a land which has lived through a more disastrous interruption of her history than any of the sister lands in the western half of the Roman Empire. All our native mythology begins in that tremendous period, though it may have in it transmuted Roman and pre-Roman fragments, used as King Arthur and King Mark used Roman brick and stone, when they could find any, for their houses and, for military purposes, the downland forts of still remoter times. Our mythology begins there because we began there.

* * *

As I begin to write of the England we know today, there returns to my mind a time, several years ago, when I attempted (unsuccessfully, I must admit) a pilgrimage on foot from Stonehenge to Land's End. On the evening of the second day, having walked across Wiltshire into Somerset, I was approaching Glastonbury, putting one foot in front of the other with a separate effort of will each time, while the strained tendons of my heels warned me, with an emphasis which

I obstinately disregarded, that the enterprise was coming to a bad end very soon. It was just after sunset, faint mists were rising from the flat country about me, and Glastonbury Tor stood up black and gigantic against the western sky. For a moment I had a heart-stopping feeling that I was coming into a very sacred place. It is certainly by no accident that we retain a special veneration for Glastonbury. In this country, perhaps, Arthur and his knights turned at bay and asserted the claim of their people to a share in the future of England, while behind them, farther to the West, other chieftains were content to maintain themselves in strongholds which had nothing to tempt the aggressor. It was in these parts, too, that Alfred first took refuge from the Danes and then successfully turned against them. Alfred sprang from the line of Cerdic, which is not a Teutonic name. He must, almost certainly, have had in him some of the old Romano-British blood. And he neither annihilated the Danes nor drove them back to their own country. He allowed them to remain, but on terms which gradually drew them into the general community. This landscape is full of ghosts—ghosts both heroic and politic, ghosts which make themselves felt because there is a continuity between what they did and what we enjoy.

But then so, if you look at it like that, is every English landscape. There is something of the flavor of what I mean in Mr. de la Mare's uncanny poem:

Very old are the woods;
  And the buds that break
Out of the briar's boughs,
  When March sounds awake;
So old with their beauty are—
  Oh, no man knows
Through what wild centuries
  Roves back the rose.

There is another rendering of a similar feeling in Kipling's story, *An Habitation Enforced,* where the Americans, George and Sophie Chapin, are discussing the Sussex house called Pardons which they afterwards buy:

> No wonder they loved it. Think of the sacrifices they made for it. Jane Elphick married the younger Torrell to keep it in the family. The octagonal room with the molded ceiling next to the big bedroom was hers.

At the end of the story Kipling sets a poem which makes his meaning even more precise:

I am the land of their fathers,
  In me the virtue stays;
I will bring back my children
  After certain days.

Under their feet in the grasses
  My clinging magic runs.
They shall return as strangers,
  They shall remain as sons.

So many things, and some of them so odd, have happened in England that all we English are in

a sense strangers who have to come back to our country and learn the traditions of our ancestral house. But, when we do, we are surrounded by ghosts that are friendly as well as heroic and politic. You cannot easily get out of sight of land on which man has been at work for immemorial ages. England is what estate agents call a matured garden. Sit down to rest on the side of the bare chalk hill with no living thing in sight or sound but a lark; that ledge in the earth on which you are sitting is a terrace leveled by Neolithic man for the purposes of his agriculture. Go down into the valley bottom and there beside shapeless mounds of earth you will find a few scented violets; this was the garden of a cottage which was deserted perhaps not more than fifty years ago. Walk along the track to the road and remember that people walked along it with the news of the Armada buzzing in their minds. Follow the road to the village, remembering that the Romans, who took it over from their predecessors, straightened out some awkward corners and engineered some doubtful stretches. The village appears in Domesday Book with some such description as "XIII hides, held by Godefroi of the King. Leofwin had it in Edward's time."

I am far from holding that we should think of England only in terms of antiquity, far indeed from holding that all modern changes are to be looked at with horror. I derive a pleasure from suddenly encountering a line of telegraph poles spanning a lonely stretch of country, which is

comparable to the pleasure of encountering an earthwork or a stone circle. There are landscapes which seem to me to be enriched by the pylons of the grid. But my England begins in antiquity and I cannot think of her without remembering all her past, without dwelling affectionately on the tool marks of countless generations which have made her surface.

II

England of the Poets

It is an odd thing that there are two subjects on which only the eccentric are ever unpatriotic. There are dozens of other matters in which an Englishman will cheerfully rate his own country below the rest of the world. He will proclaim our politicians, our buildings, our cookery, our morals, or our narrow-mindedness to be the most loathsome that can anywhere be found. He will condemn our insular prejudices, our hatred of new ideas, he will jeer at our taste in clothes, music, painting, and what else you will. But he will not impugn, or allow anyone else to impugn, the valor of our fighting men, or the preeminence of our poets Even Kipling, who was not in the habit of jeering at the Army, got into trouble for suggesting that English regiments might, in certain circumstances, break and run. And as for the poets . . . ! The Englishman does not need to be a poet himself or even to read poetry to hold it as an article of religious faith that Homer was the greatest of poets only until Shakespeare appeared, and that we can match Shakespeare's distinguished subordinates not merely against any other nation, but against all the rest of the world.

My business here is not to write a history of

English poetry, but to suggest, if I can, how our poets have both expressed and helped to form our life in England. The man of whom I have spoken, who maintains the greatness of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth without reading them, is not so absurd as he may appear: he is, without any conscious effort of his own, different from what he would have been if they had never written. In just the same way, he may never enter a church between his christening and his funeral, but all the same the Church of England does in some measure express his character and in the same measure has helped to form him.

The comparison is not inapt, for our poetry is to us a sort of national religion. There are glories of English prose, many of them, but I do not think anyone would maintain that they have had the same effect on our national pride and spirit, on our awareness of ourselves, as the glories of our poetry. Supposing that a student, desiring to make a picture of our national character, were limited to one field of study, this is the field he should choose.

Our poetry is coextensive in time with our language as we know it, and both arose together after one of the greatest and most formative cataclysms in our history As Mr. Belloc has so ably argued:

> What *did* happen was the somewhat sudden permeation, after the pestilence, of the Upper speech by the Lower, and their amalgam in the form we use today and call the English language.
>
> I repeat: Under the tremendous blow of the

Black Death these two disparate elements fused and produced a third thing, which is English. There was such dislocation of social life that the special training of the wealthier children was not maintained, that posts clerical and other—normally kept for a certain social standing—were filled rapidly, of necessity, almost at random. The effect was fully felt in about twenty years—or a little more—and by the days of Richard II the transformation was accomplished.

Somewhere in the depths of Asia a harmless micro-organism underwent a biological mutation—that seems to be the way these things happen—and became deadly to human life. It moved westwards, carrying destruction with it, and at last landed in England, at Weymouth, in 1348 In its campaign it carried off perhaps as much as a half, more probably a quarter, of the population, and then passed away itself. The seed of the Black Death perished from that malady which appears to afflict our own species in our own times—a decline of the birth rate. But however much destruction, from the purely statistical standpoint, it may have accomplished before it perished, it did effect a huge historical revolution. And when it went there were two English boys whom it had spared, and who were waiting to take advantage of what it had done.

One was perhaps sixteen—and his name was William Langland. The other was perhaps eight—and his name was Geoffrey Chaucer. It is noteworthy that, of the first two English poets, one

should have so definitely looked backward while the other as definitely looked forward. Langland, in the *Vision of Piers Plowman,* wrote a tongue which, though to us it may seem rather more crabbed than that of Chaucer, is still unquestionably English. But his technique was very different from that which the English poets were to follow; it was a technique which was not to be seen again for five hundred years and then only in a sort of antiquarian revival. It derived from the rhymeless, alliterative measures of the Anglo-Saxons, and only in vocabulary and syntax was it really connected with the new English movement of that time. But Langland was an Englishman of a type that has never disappeared. It would be possible to deduce him from the first three lines of *Piers Plowman*:

> On a summer's morning when soft was the sun,
> I shope me in shrowdes as I a shepe were
> Or elles an heremite unholy of workes.

He thought that the world of his own day was full of degeneracy and wickedness, did Langland. In particular he thought that organized religion was full of hypocrisy. So, after a first line which is characteristic of the English poet's delight in the fair weather of his own country, it takes him only two more lines to deliver a blow at a religious pest.

In Chaucer the marriage of the two strains produced a more even balance. It may be allowed to us to wonder whether he knew what he had

done when he wrote those eighteen lines which are the real beginning of English poetry:

Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote
The droghte of Marche hath percèd to the rote,
And bathèd every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour:
Whan Zephirus eeke with his swete breeth
Inspirèd hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen all the night with open ye,
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages);
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
(And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;
And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen, when that they were seke.

Chaucer, to be sure, had written other poems, and good poems, before he wrote the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. *Troilus and Criseyde* or *The Legend of Good Women* might perhaps claim to be the original fount from which this great river takes rise Thus do several streams dispute the honor of being the one and only source of the Thames. But, though that is a dispute which it would not be easy to settle, there is a point at which one can assert: "*Here,* at any rate, the stream manifests itself as the Thames, and no one can say that it is not the Thames."

So with the lines I have quoted. Chaucer's earlier poems, fine as they are, *might* not have been in direct, causative connection with English poetry as we know it—or as we should know it—today. For that matter there were exquisite clear trickles, like the tiny streams that rise in chalk hills, a full century before—such poems as "Sumer is icumen in" and the lovely

I sing of a maiden
  That is makeles,
King of all kinges
  To her sone sche ches.
He cam also stille
  There his moder was,
As dew in Aprille
  That falleth on the grass.

But the opening of the Prologue is the unquestionable beginning. In language and versification as well as in spirit it marks out the way which Chaucer's successors were to follow.

To what extent England's poets can represent her to the rest of the world is a matter for argument. It is a matter for argument, I suppose, how much any poetry carries to those who do not know as a native speech the language in which it is written. Yet there does seem here to be some difference between us and other nations. Most Englishmen who read German poetry agree with most Germans as to what is the best poetry in their language. (I speak of course of the days when Germans were still allowed to admire

Heine.) It is the same with English readers and French poetry. But foreign readers are not, to the same extent, at one with us in their view of our poets, except for Shakespeare. After him they rank Byron and then Wilde, from which judgments we in the mass strongly dissent.

Save for a handful of scholars, the Continent will have nothing of Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Meredith. Of course these poets have readers abroad, but I think it can fairly be asserted that they have never meant as much in France and Germany as Goethe and Heine, Racine, Hugo, Baudelaire and Verlaine have meant here.

Englishmen worry about this when they think of it. Byron was undoubtedly, as Keats put it, a fine thing in the "worldly, theatrical, pantomimical" way. He had a curious nature and an extraordinary career, and, for the purposes of the legend, he was fortunate in the circumstances of his death. He contrived to express with tremendous vehemence the sort of feeling that was in the air throughout Europe. But, except in a few lines and snatches, he was out of the main stream of English poetry. He enjoyed an amateur's acquaintance with the English language; he never had the smallest idea of how to get the best out of it. He was like a man of great courage and physical strength whose force of will enables him to remain on the back of a high-spirited horse, to the alarmed admiration of all beholders, as com-

pared with the horse-master who makes the same animal do twice as well without any fuss.

Save for one piece (at the outside, three), Wilde's reputation depends more on his prose than on his verse. Both are deliberately derivative. But he, too, somehow contrived to be "a fine thing" in the same way as Byron. He was a sort of anthology of the Decadence, a movement of which Europe was profoundly conscious. And for the purposes of his legend also, the circumstances of his end were fortunate—if that be not too callous a way to speak of them.

In both Byron and Wilde, it was the spectacle which fascinated the Continent, and the spectacle derived its force from the fact that they represented widespread moods which were greater than the sufferers from them. But the poets who have more accurately expressed England do not "travel" as well. A writer who is mainly a spectacle—of energy, in Byron's case, of an attitude, in Wilde's—naturally appeals more to foreigners than one whose appeal is inseparable from the very words he uses It is a difference analogous to that which exists between the silent film and the "talkie." And if you wish to see what may happen to an English poet when the most sympathetic of foreigners attempts to explain him in his own terms, you need go no further than the famous *Ariel* by M. André Maurois. This book depends almost entirely on what may be called the spectacular in Shelley, the unconventionality of his ideas and his life, the element of the ethereal

in his nature. M. Maurois makes a picture of the grandson of the American quack dentist which is as fascinating as it is consistent with itself. But the further the English reader goes the more he becomes aware that something, which after all is important, is missing, that this is a portrait not of Shelley, but of another man who was strikingly like him in all things but one. M. Maurois does indeed mention Shelley's poetry. He even gives some of it in translation It is when he does so that the English reader begins to understand what has gone wrong—thus:

> Le vrai amour diffère en ceci et de l'or et de l'argile—qu'en le divisant on ne le diminue point.

When I read that for the first time I was struck by an odd sense of familiarity. But it needed a little hard thinking before I could see in it a version of:

> True love in this differs from gold and clay,
> That to divide is not to take away.

In so far as I am right in saying that the meaning of English poetry is inseparable from the actual words in which it is written, so far, obviously, it is hopeless for any but a few foreigners to surprise England's secret round this corner. Yet here remains one viewpoint from which those who can reach it may see a great deal of England.

Even to Englishmen it is, if not a secret, yet something which has to be overheard and understood, not something which can ever be stated in

plain terms. The first passage which comes to mind when we are thinking of the English poet on his own country is John of Gaunt's speech in *Richard II*.

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise;
This fortress, built by nature for herself,
Against infection, and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world;
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

And so on. But it is not at all a characteristic passage. It is simply Shakespeare showing that he could write magnificent verse even in the mood of a leader-writer. But he and the others normally praise their country implicitly, not explicitly. They praise her by expressing their joy in her; they render her sights and sounds and smells instead of making generalizations.

What I mean can be perceived in the first line of my quotation from Langland or in the first two of that from Chaucer. Or, if it be preferred, anywhere up and down the length and breadth of Shakespeare, who, it seems, never left England in the flesh and did not need to do so in the spirit, since he found there all he needed for the vast descriptive background of his work. The Forest of

Arden is in Warwickshire and so is that "Wood near Athens." Venus lies on a bank of our own primroses when she woos Adonis. Perdita describes an English spring in Bohemia:

Now, my fairest friend,
I would I had some flowers o' the spring, that might
Become your time of day,—and yours, and yours,
That wear upon your virgin branches yet
Your maidenheads growing· O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that frighted, thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty, violets, dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses,
That die unmarried ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
Most incident to maids; bold oxlips, and
The crown-imperial; lilies of all kinds,
The flower-de-luce being one.

Or a landscape of a very different sort in a line and a half:

Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood

Wherever the casual reader dips into the corpus of English poetry he will find himself not far from something of the sort. I have taken only the most obvious examples and must be on guard against the temptation to compile here a miniature "Anthology of English Landscape." But a few more examples may be allowed, to drive home

the argument. And to find them I am at liberty to stick a pin into the pages of five and a half centuries as I will. Here is George Meredith (whom let no man call Welsh):

Happy, happy time, when the white star hovers
  Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
  Threading it with color, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
  Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is: and strange she is, and secret,
  Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.
Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
  Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter,
  Chill as a dull face frowning on a song
Ay, but shows the Southwest a ripple-feathered bosom,
  Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
  Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

Or there is that other poet who is sometimes claimed as Welsh—William Morris, as English an Englishman as ever lived:

Now, sweet, sweet it is through the land to be straying
'Mid the birds and the blossoms and the beasts of the field;
Love mingles with love, and no evil is weighing
On thy heart or mine, where all sorrow is healed.

From township to township, o'er down and by tillage
Far, far have we wandered and long was the day;
But now cometh eve at the end of the village,
Where over the gray wall the church riseth gray.

There is wind in the twilight, in the white road before us
The straw from the ox-yard is blowing about;
The moon's rim is rising, a star glitters o'er us,
And the vane on the spire-top is swinging in doubt.

Or, in our own times, there is Edward Thomas —another Welsh name—with:

Tall nettles cover up, as they have done
These many springs, the rusty harrow, the plow
Long worn, and the roller made of stone,
Only the elm butt tops the nettles now.

This corner of the farmyard I like most;
As well as any bloom upon a flower
I like the dust on the nettles, never lost
Except to prove the sweetness of a shower.

Of all the periods in our poetry, the eighteenth century makes the greatest difficulty for my argument. It was a time when the poet preferred to generalize rather than to particularize, to produce his effects by precise choice from among a limited number of epithets and images, and to emphasize his submission to this discipline by the use of, or reference to, the pictures made two thousand years before by Greek and Latin poets. Yet even here, in mid-century, we find Collins writing of "hamlets brown and dim discover'd spires" and:

Now air is hush'd, save where the weak-ey'd bat,
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn.

And then there is James Thomson, the author of *The Seasons* and *The Castle of Indolence,* today more often remembered than read, but still often enchanting in description

* * *

I may seem to have betrayed myself into the folly of claiming what I call the descriptive background as peculiar to English poetry. I am not really so foolish as that. But I do claim that it plays a more persistent and important part in our corpus of verse than in that of any other nation. That would seem to mean that the English have always been happily conscious of the country in which they live and of its advantages and attractions.

Not long ago there was a distinct tendency for this consciousness to become, so to say, self-conscious. The so-called "Georgian" poets never formed a school or felt themselves to be a community. It was their critics who detected in them a solidarity of interests which they had never knowingly experienced. But if there was anything which united them it was a rather excessive preoccupation with the English countryside. In one of those moments of wishing to laugh at oneself, which leads to misunderstanding by fellow-countrymen as well as by foreigners, I described

the whole "Georgian movement" as "the Week-end School of Poetry." The phrase gained a certain currency among people who did not know that it had been coined by a writer who himself lay at least as much open as anyone else to the charge which it implied.

Looking back now, I think that the charge had a deeper significance than was understood at the time either by us or by our critics. Let it be understood that I am here considering "Georgian poetry," under this aspect, as a social symptom, without attempting even an opinion on its merits. But I think that, in their nostalgic and sometimes almost invalidish preoccupation with landscape, the "Week-end Poets" were very important as a social symptom. They were, as I meant to convey by the nickname, men whose center of life was in the great towns and who did not like it. They were also conscious of living in an age when a profound change was coming over the England of the poets—and they did not like that either. The change had indeed got under way a hundred years before, but it was now going on with a dizzying and sickening rapidity.

It was manifest in the changes in road surfaces and road amenities. Before the War there were few roads in England that showed any hostility to stoutly shod feet, not many where the walker, tasting the country mile by mile, was made by the other traffic to feel himself an alien intruder. After the War the walker found it difficult to choose ways where he would not every two or

three minutes hear those winged chariots hurrying near.

Even when he turned aside from main roads and secondary roads, when he struck out across the open hills, he was liable to find evidences of the change at the top of every rise Where had been once only gorse and windy grass and a few sheep, there would be "development." Once, about fifteen years ago, I was riding at full tilt with a companion over what seemed an untouched stretch of the South Downs, when she, half a dozen lengths ahead of me, pulled me up with lifted arm I reined in and joined her at a trot, saying:

"What's the matter?"

"I don't think we ought to gallop here," she answered, pointing to a notice-board which said: "SITE OF PROPOSED CHURCH."

As she was a parson's daughter, I presumed she knew best and we went at a decorous walk over what might one day be consecrated ground. I do not know whether the proposed church was ever built, but I do know that, when last I saw that piece of country, no one could have galloped over it for fifty yards in any direction, because it was sprinkled with villas and their hopefully fenced gardens.

The meaning of these villas and their back yards, of the motor roads and the cars that run along them, of the petrol pumps and roadhouses and guesthouses and camping places that go with them, is a thing which I shall have to discuss

later. Meanwhile I beg the reader to suspend judgment—on me. I do not want to be put down at this early stage as one who believes that every disturbance of the traditional amenities is due to the deliberate malevolence of sadistic swine.

But, taking all this process of change into account, it is not so hard to understand the feelings which made the "Week-end Poets" write as they did. They were the end of a tradition which had persisted for centuries without violent change. All Englishmen, as I have said, are in some measure molded by the English poets, even without having read, or at any rate consciously apprehended, a line that the poets have written. But these were men who were acutely conscious of the tradition, knowing the sacred text word by word.

They compromised with the monster. They bought cars when they could afford them (and sometimes when they could not) or, before renting their week-end cottages, went carefully into the matter of bus services. Thus did Wordsworth before them, while howling dismally and melodiously in sonnets about the desecration of the countryside by railways, inquire of knowledgeable friends in which railway stocks it would be wisest to invest his money.

Their position was, within the limits of human nature, perfectly reasonable. A country which had won the love of innumerable generations was slipping and sliding under their eyes like a dissolving view. The change offered them numerous advantages which they seized with or with-

out conscious gratitude; it is, after all, only human on a winter's day to prefer indoor sanitation to the other sort. But their efforts were almost feverishly devoted to recording what was going so fast before it should have gone altogether

Like all true efforts this produced a number of falsities. Here is a characteristic falsity:

Blue skies are over Cotswold
And April snows go by,
The lasses turn their ribbons
For April's in the sky,
And April is the season
When Sabbath girls are dressed,
From Rodboro' to Campden,
In all their silken best.

This is *niaiserie* at its worst and no one can deny that this last effort of the English traditional poets had frequent touches of *niaiserie,* sometimes even in its best results. It was least apparent, of course, in those who, like Mr. Edmund Blunden, were genuinely country-bred. Mr. Blunden's best landscapes and village scenes are in the tradition, without any hint of invalidism, and only sometimes the least touch of nostalgia. Thus, in "The Poor Man's Pig":

Already fallen plum-bloom stars the green,
And apple-boughs as knarred as old toads' backs
Wear their small roses ere a rose is seen,
The building thrush watches old Job who stacks
The fresh-peeled osiers on the sunny fence;
The pent sow grunts to hear him stumping by,
And tries to push the bolt and scamper thence,

But her ringed snout still keeps her to the sty.
Then out he lets her run; away she snorts
In bundling gallop for the cottage door,
With hungry hubbub begging crusts and orts,
Then like the whirlwind bumping round once more;
Nuzzling the dog, making the pullets run,
And sulky as a child when her play's done.

There is more than the "week-end" spirit in that. But the direct quality of this work is a thing that is disappearing from English poetry We have now, on the one hand, men who are striving to hold fast to something that is slipping away from them and on the other hand younger men who are trying, sometimes with rather wry faces, to make the best of what is taking its place. Their effort is at least as self-conscious as that against which it is a reaction. But the two sorts of poetry illustrate with marvelous vividness the process of change through which England is going today. In doing this our poets fail us no more now than they have done in the past. The picture they provide is up to date. It may be that the change now going on is so fundamental that there will be a real break in the tradition. I prefer to believe that the future reality of England will come closer to the old ideal than anything that history has to record. If so, the poets of a century hence will be in a line traceable to Chaucer and Spenser.

* * *

Those of my readers (say 90 per cent of them) who are better qualified than I to express opinions

on this subject will please forgive me if I write about English music only in a postscript to what I have said about English poetry. My excuses are two. One is that the general bearing of what I have to say must be much the same in both fields. The second is that I had to have help in writing about music and that I could not decently ask for more help than would fill a postscript.

But the help I did get was surprisingly to the point. I consulted a distinguished composer and conductor of the younger generation, and this is the story he told me. Some years ago, at one of the universities, a concert of new works was given to an audience which was asked to make its guesses at the composer of each work. There was one, a violin and piano sonata, on which a remarkable unanimity was obtained. Different names were given by every member of the audience, but every name was that of an English composer. The right name was that of Frederick Delius.

Now Delius, though he was born in Bradford in 1863, was the son of a German who had been naturalized only three years before, and he studied music and, indeed, spent most of his life abroad. I dare to express the opinion that the years, including those of his adolescence, which he spent in England made of him an Englishman to an extent which no later experience could change. His *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* is partly based on a Scandinavian folk-tune, but it is such a description of an hour in

England as one finds again and again in the poets, and I do not think it will be argued that it could have come from any other country.

The friend who gave me the illustration of Delius gave me also a second and a third. Handel, he tells me, in his young days in Italy wrote a work called *Time and Truth,* which he revised and amplified during his old days in England, and the revisions and amplifications are all in what must be called the English style. The third illustration proves the power of England over those who subject themselves to her influence. It is that of Mendelssohn.

Mendelssohn belonged to a family of German-Jewish bankers and his descendants go on banking peaceably in Germany even under the changed conditions of today. But he spent an important part of his time here and Victorian England hardly thought of him as a foreigner. The best known of all his compositions is, I suppose, the *Spring Song,* and the first title that he himself gave to it was *Camberwell Green.* If it does express one mood of an English spring (as I think it does) in the same way that Delius's *Cuckoo* expresses another, it is because he felt that mood in contemplation of Camberwell Green—then a rather different place from what it is now. I hope I may be permitted to appropriate his *Hebrides Overture* to my present purpose. The Hebrides, I admit, do not fall within my geographical scope. But this lovely piece of music might have been inspired by the sea on a number

of English beaches—never, I think, by any German beach. But I am not, I hope, wandering from the point when I say that the Jews, marvelous executants as they have so often been in music, can show no composer to compare with Mendelssohn. It so happened that this man showed in his art the assimilative power of our country. He was moved by the desire which all our poets and musicians have felt to express her physical charms, the chances and changes of her always interesting weather.

The subject of music is, as I have confessed, for me a quicksand over which I step quickly and timorously, putting my feet as nearly as possible where I am told. But I will risk one step of my own. Indeed, I could hardly in honor neglect to mention, in this chapter, a work in which English poetry and English music are united with so close an approach to perfection. It is the "Wenlock Edge" cycle, the lovely thing which Dr. Vaughan Williams has made out of the poetry of A. E. Housman. Gervase Elwes, who sang it so well, is dead, and I cannot believe that anyone will ever sing it as well again. But you have only to listen, in any rendering, to the gusts of wind in the first song of the cycle or to the bells in *Bredon Hill,* to understand what I mean when I speak of the way in which England has influenced her inhabitants.

* * *

It is perhaps almost too absurd to be apologized for that there is in this book no mention of English

painters. Let it be my excuse that they tell very much the same story as the poets and the musicians—and that one could not begin to write on them without going on for a very long time.

III

The English Scene

SOME years ago it happened that I spent two consecutive week-ends in examining two new houses. Both had been built by men with strong views on houses, men to whom they were the expression of ideas as well as places to live in, and a more decided contrast of ideas I never saw.

The first of the two was built on a hilltop overlooking what had already become a London season-ticket-holders' suburb. It was on a fairly considerable scale and had even what corresponded to a gatekeeper's lodge at the entrance to the drive, which was built in the same style. As we approached, my companion said: "It looks as though an aeroplane had landed on the top of the hill and pupped."

It had three wings, one of which was shorter than the others. It was of ferro-concrete on a steel framework, with flat roofs, partly protected by concrete awnings. The windows occupied a good deal of the walls and ran round the corners in all the pride of the new methods of construction which make this possible. Inside, it was full of the latest devices. The doors of the rooms were of glass and metal. There was one open fire, but its ashes could be emptied down a chute by merely

pulling a handle. The windows in even the ground-floor rooms were so placed that when one sat one could see from them only the surrounding hills at a great distance, so that one had a curious feeling of floating through the air.

There was a good deal of local feeling about this house—by which I mean, of course, ill-feeling. Many of the neighbors did their utmost to obstruct its building. I am not prepared to say that this was entirely without justification. The owner of the house had something of a passion for fountains and, to keep them fed, he had erected, in the background, but not very far in the background, a tall water tower in white concrete which appeared to me to conflict with the scene more than did the house. Against the water tower there was a fives court, also in white concrete, which somehow suggested that someone had put it there for a moment and was going to move it to its proper place later on.

But there is no doubt in my mind that "local feeling" sprang not from such features as this, which were fairly open to criticism, but from the sheer, alarming novelty of the whole thing. I am writing of seven years ago, and such houses are not now so novel, though they are still not very common on that scale. But at that time this house was startling, and there are many people whose instinct toward a house that startles them is the same as toward a spider that startles them—to squash it.

I do not know whether the courageous man who

commissioned a young, able, and highly original architect[1] to design this house for him still likes it as much as he did. (He was, by the way, rather amusingly, a Professor of Archeology.) Very likely both he and his architect wish they had it all to do over again. That is the worst of experimentation in building. The poet who wants to try a new method of expressing himself need use no more in any stage of the process of trial and error than paper and ink: a house is a different matter. But, whatever can be said against that particular house, I am sure the argument at which "local feeling" hastily snatched—that it was an eyesore because it "conflicted with the landscape" —was nonsense New buildings do seem to conflict with the landscape. The new red-brick houses that were going up on every hand in Tudor times probably seemed raw and garish to many sensitive conservative eyes: so, for that matter, must the Norman castles and the medieval cathedrals.

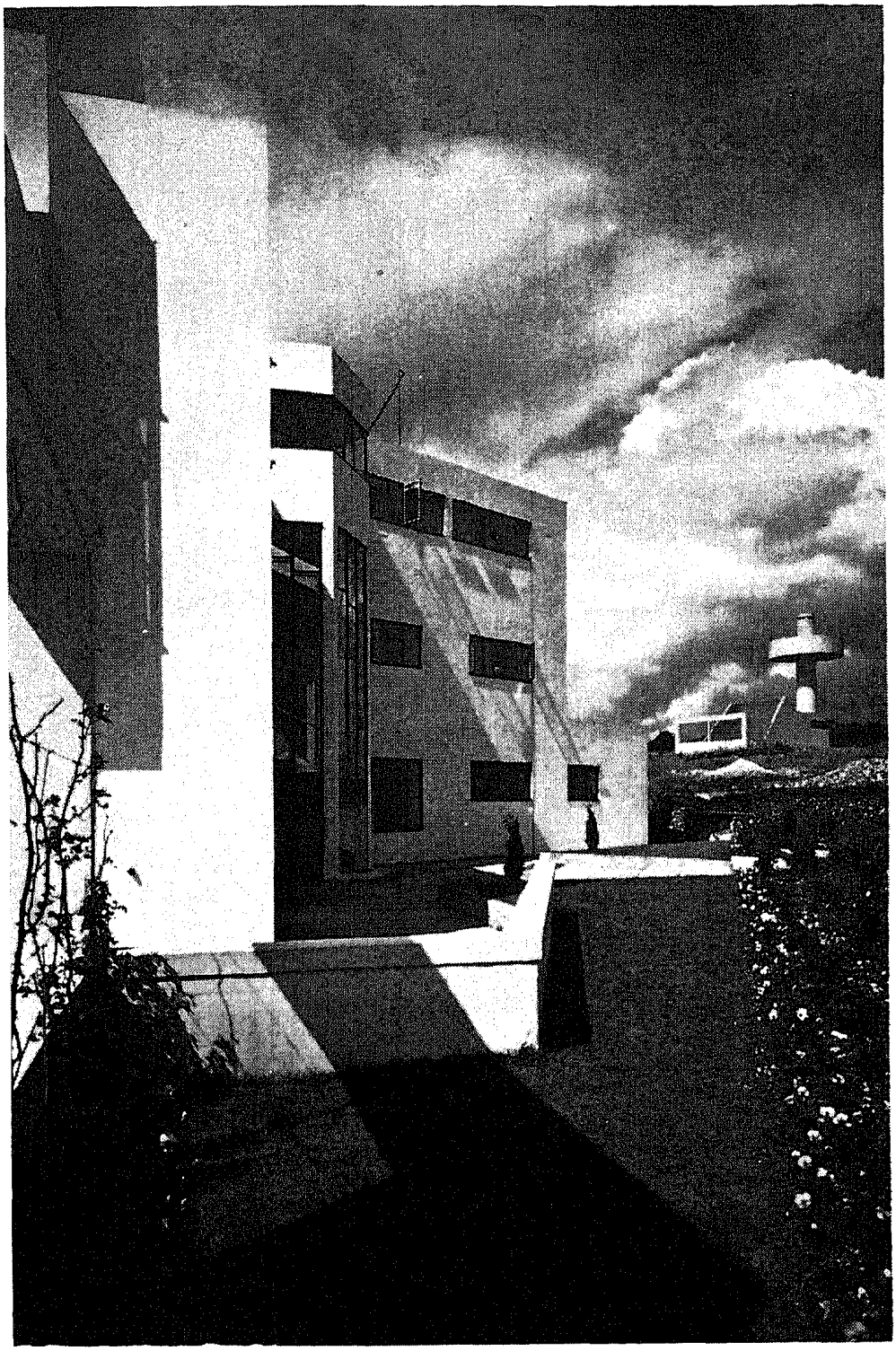
A week after I had seen the house I have been describing I went into another part of the country and saw another new house of a very different sort. The architect was also the man who intended to live in it, and he had built in the spirit of one who desires to put into one building the ideals of a lifetime. Let me admit that, in the inevitable comparison between these two specimens of diametrically opposite schools of thought, I was prejudiced from the outset in favor of the

[1] Mr Philip Connell.

second. The architect is a man who has taught me almost all I have been able to learn, not only of English architecture, but also of English landscape. He is in the direct descent of William Morris, believing that beauty is essential in daily life and that the first requisite of beauty is honest craftsmanship. His house was an uncompromising demonstration of his guiding principle.

It was to be an addition to one of the most beautiful small towns in England—a town which he has spent a great deal of his life in preserving. That, for a man who has preached so much, meant a difficult essay in practice. Throughout all that countryside, until quite recently, no one has thought of building in anything but stone. My friend had to fetch his stone from some fifteen or twenty miles away, but that, he assured me rather anxiously, would be regarded as the use of local materials even by medieval standards. He followed the example of his masters by designing with the utmost care every molding of window and fireplace throughout the house, the vaulting of the cellar, the dove-cot in the garden, and the summerhouse where the croquet set is kept, watching every wall as it went up, selecting the material, and checking the workmanship with an unwearying eye.

That house seems to grow out of the land on which it stands and not to be perched on it. It is open to criticism. Medievalism seems to me to have been overdone in it It was a long-standing joke between the builder and me that he



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HIGH AND OVER, AMERSHAM

"There are many people whose instinct toward a house that startles them is the same as to a spider that startles them—to squash it."

Courtesy F. L. Griggs.

DOVER'S HOUSE, CAMPDEN

"This house seems to grow out of the land on which it stands and not to be perched on it."

was going to install the telephone when he could pick up a good fourteenth-century instrument. (He now has the telephone—and it is one of that new design which induces me to think that we do make some progress in the comeliness of our modern implements.) There are other points in which, I think, he could with advantage have trafficked with the mammon of modernity.

But this house is nevertheless a monument (and one which cannot be casually razed) of a faith. The builder is, on the whole, a pessimist. He sees unnecessarily nasty little Council houses springing up everywhere round him in the country that he loves. I think that at heart he believes that the game is up and the world must go through a very bad time before it begins to be played again on the only terms he will accept. His house may survive that bad time, and so may some of the things he has worked so hard to save, but he will know nothing of that. But he cannot stop himself from doing what is in his power to preserve continuity, to leave to still unimaginable future generations examples from which they can proceed to unimaginably finer things.

* * *

These two men, I contend, were both inspired by the same wish—to add something to the English scene which should not be unworthy of it. Their methods were different enough to produce a riot but that matters little. The wish is what matters, and though the evidence of it may some-

times be difficult to discern, it is very common among Englishmen. We are conscious and proud of the beauty of our country and prepared, rightly or wrongly, to back it against all competition.

The evidence, I say, is sometimes difficult to perceive, and it would be easy to produce a volume of evidence on the other side. The ruffians who destroyed the stones of Avebury are cases in point; so are those untouchables who stamp the smooth sides of chalk downs with their nauseating advertisements. But I do not think that the existence of a few persons without imagination or appreciation disproves my contention. Nor do the horrid phenomena of ribbon development and what Dr. Inge has so happily called "bungaloid growths."

These indeed are often due to that love of the English countryside of which I am speaking and could be adduced in support of the contention that "each man kills the thing he loves." Mixed motives, no doubt, induced most of the inhabitants of Peacehaven to settle in that once pleasant spot —cheapness, health, and so on. But there can be no doubt that one powerful motive in very many of them was to enjoy that beauty of the Downs which they have largely destroyed. Largely—not wholly. Even here, even in the angle made by the roads from Brighton to Newhaven and from Newhaven to Lewes, there are unspoilt stretches of downland, empty miles of gorse and grass, hidden bottoms on which one comes suddenly over the crest of a wind-blown hill, and which the in-

habitants of Peacehaven may still enjoy in spite of themselves.

Nothing is to be achieved by bidding the inhabitants of Peacehaven back to the cities whence they came. For one thing they would not go: for another, no sensible man can think of any good reason why they should be made to go. Until well under two centuries ago, England was a mainly agricultural and pastoral country, and the background of her scenery was part of the mind of every Englishman. With the Industrial Revolution we saw something which looked like the rise of a new population beside the first. When Disraeli spoke of "the Two Nations" he explained that he meant the rich and poor. But he would have been subtler if he had drawn a distinction between the old nation, which would have continued to exist without the modern methods of manufacture, and that vast new nation which came into existence solely because of them.

It would have been a false distinction at that, because the old nation has always exercised a potent influence on the new and has unconsciously striven to bring it into the old ways. If our cities are sprawling out across the fields, if every beautiful spot is a temptation to the speculative builder of monstrosities, that is because the men of the new race desire to enter into the heritage of which certain economic aberrations robbed them a hundred years ago.

Improved standards of living and improved methods of communication offer them a hope,

though to many of them still only a very dim and distant hope, of recovering their birthright. But these are they who, pursuing an ancient instinct, are, as we say, "spoiling" the countryside. They set up settlements of the type of which it was once rightly said that they should have for coat-of-arms a goat rampant, supported by two runner ducks and surmounted by a battered zinc dust-bin. When they go into the country for the day by car or bicycle or motor coach, they leave litter, they pull up primroses and violets by the roots, they damage hedges and leave gates open. But they have been kept out for years. It is an instinct which brings them back—not knowledge, but a desire for knowledge, for intimate acquaintance, that sometimes takes a crude and unfortunate shape. As the acquaintanceship grows deeper, more a part of normal experience, it will be expressed with less violent fingers.

Even the houses that spoil the countryside, shoddy and ugly as they often are, sometimes give unexpected gleams of hope—or better than gleams. I used to live in the country, but near enough to London to travel thither every morning: there was a Pullman car on the train which made traveling no burden at all. At a point nearer to the terminus than to my home there was a pleasant stretch of untouched fields, hedges with elms in them, a few haystacks and an oldish cottage or two. It was a quite commonplace English landscape with nothing in particular to recommend it, except that it occurred after the traveler

thought that unmitigated London had already begun. I suppose that it belonged to someone who was too old-fashioned, or too greatly attached to it, to listen to the persuasions of the speculative builder. And, I suppose, eventually that someone must have died or have found himself in need of money, for one day we in the Pullman car noticed that building had begun. Soon the fields were covered with raw scars and heaps of unsightly building materials. And we shrugged our shoulders, knowing what we had to expect.

Soon it was there, rows of small houses, all alike as peas in a pod. Or more like, since there are generally small differences among the peas in any pod, and here there were no differences at all. That was the point which we all chose for comment—and I heard, and enriched, a number of discussions of the increasing standardization of mankind One of our wits speculated on how long it would take a man who had strayed into his neighbor's house in a fog to find out his mistake: the general impression was that he never would. (I believe there is a funny story on this theme.)

Not long afterwards I was saved from the temptation to go on being superior by the fact that I ceased to travel on that line. When I saw those houses again they had been inhabited for two or three years, and I felt a little ashamed of our easy generalizations. There was a row of twenty gardens backing on to the railway and among them differences had been established as wide and as many as space allowed. Two or three (but not

more) were neglected weed patches and cat-runs —characteristic in their own way. Each of the others was a picture of enthusiastic individual effort. One was laid out as a formal garden of the latter-day type with true-lovers' knots in crazy-paving paths. Another consisted of hardly anything but a badminton court with the grass well worn on both sides of the net. In a third an elderly shirt-sleeved gentleman was on his knees apparently removing weeds one by one from a lawn which, to the eyes of a watcher in a train, looked as though it would have done credit to the courts in any Cambridge college. A fourth was vegetables from fence to kitchen door. A fifth contained a fine, rather austerely arranged display of azaleas. A sixth was simply a tangle of bright-colored flowers like a cottage garden in the remotest village.

This was an instructive example of the English desire to work on the earth whenever and wherever possible. It is strange that it should have survived the period in which we became the first of the great industrial nations, the first to maintain a huge population, wholly divorced from the soil, on food brought from overseas. This is proof of the strength of the instinct. If it could survive that first shock of industrialism and begin to manifest itself again in our own times, then it must be strong enough to fight through the difficulties which its own renaissance has created.

The Englishman is powerfully moved, whenever the opportunity offers, to make a garden of

his land And when I say the Englishman, I mean all the various strains that have come to England and fallen in love with her. And when I speak of gardens, I do not mean that our ancestors were principally, or often consciously, landscape gardeners. Their conscious motives in interfering with the scenery were generally as practical, even to the point of sordidness, as those of the speculative builder. But the spirit of the Lord entered into them and made them do better than they intended. It may one day so enter into the speculative builder—when our industrial nation has recovered from the first wild excitement of its return to the country.

There is an example—not a sordid one—in the great sailor of the eighteenth century (was it Rodney?) who spent the days of his retirement walking about his estates with a pocketful of acorns, which he thrust into the ground wherever he discovered a suitable place. He hoped that after his death these acorns would furnish timber for such ships as he had gloriously commanded. He was wrong in that, but I do not doubt that his patriotic hobby was responsible for the existence today of many heart-uplifting oaks.

The oak is the most ancient of our trees: it was not brought into England by man. But it, and our scenery with it, have benefited from man's efforts in other directions. Thus Dr. Howarth tells us, in his admirable *Scenic Heritage of England and Wales:*

A high proportion of our woodland, especially in southeastern England from Kent to Hampshire, is coppiced, having only relatively few standard trees left in it. This practice probably originated when, as the oaks were felled, it was found that the hazel and other undergrowing shrubs flourished more freely as they received more light, and that they, too, had their uses An endeavor to save the timber trees from complete destruction led to enactments that not less than a dozen or so of standard trees were to be left in each acre, and thus came into being the coppiced woodlands with their rich carpets of bluebells, primroses, and other wild flora which we now enjoy, and the great oaks branching widely as their habit is when they stand apart.

Take, as another example, the cherry, which was first brought to Italy in 68 B.C. by Lucullus, after his campaigns in Asia. We can assume that the Romans brought it with them to England or else that, so to speak, they threw it across the Channel from Gaul just before they came themselves. The primary reason for naturalizing the cherry here was the lusciousness of its fruit. But, however it came here, would anyone today care to form a picture of England without the blossoming cherry orchards in Kent and in the Vale of Evesham?

We cannot, I think, in any of these matters separate the utilitarian purpose from the achievement of beauty. The horse-chestnut must have been introduced because it provides a fine wood for furniture. But there was also the beauty of

its blooms and the fact that it is a fine upstanding tree. The glossiness of its seeds, which are so pleasant where they lie in the roads at the beginning of autumn, may have been taken into consideration, though not perhaps their usefulness as the materials of a child's game. The horse-chestnut is yet another example, and a good one, of the change which is constantly being made by the hand of man in the English scene. Who now can think of the opening days of summer without thinking of its incandescent spikes? Yet Queen Elizabeth was born too soon ever to see a horse-chestnut in flower.

I cannot forbear from adding a slightly ludicrous instance. We owe that dismal growth, the araucaria or monkey-puzzle tree, to the sixth Duke of Devonshire and his gifted gardener, Sir Joseph Paxton. It seems not to be true, though it is sometimes asserted, that they were the first to plant a specimen in England, but they were, if I may use the expression, monkey-puzzle fans, they rooted for the araucaria. They exchanged enthusiastic letters about fine examples of the tree and did their best to extend its popularity. This may not be a happy illustration of the Englishman's desire to cooperate with nature in the improvement of England, but it is an illustration none the less.

And yet again an example, which is interesting because it is a thing of our own times and is responsible for a change which is still going on.

Last year I made a tour through the counties of East Anglia which I had not visited since I was a child. Everywhere I saw evidence of a root vegetable which was quite new to me. It resembled a giant parsnip and had a warm buff color, which was very pleasant when seen in masses, as in the innumerable carts which were carrying it and in the huge piles which were waiting for the carts by the side of the road. This root, I discovered at last, was the sugar beet, the growing of which is wholly a post-war development. During the War the production of beet sugar on the Continent suffered severely, and it was seen that here was an opportunity for the establishment of a new industry which would be of assistance to agriculture. The opportunity was taken by the provision of a subsidy for manufacturers dependent on the payment by them of minimum prices for the sugar beets which they purchased. Here purely economic considerations have introduced something new into the landscape of East Anglia, something new enough to puzzle and please the eye of the observer. Nor is that all. The sugar beet is grown also in West Sussex, but not so extensively as to be specially noticeable. There is no factory in that district, and growers allege that the cost of transport to factories at a distance deprives them of their profit. They are asking for a factory to be set up among them. If their plea is answered, they say, they will be able to put many more acres under sugar beet, and so the land-

scape of West Sussex will be modified in the same way as that of East Anglia.

* * *

Such are the elements of the English scene, and such some of the dangers to which its beauties are exposed. But the scene varies over even so short a period as can be reckoned in centuries, and the dangers vary too. In recent years (say, the last thirty or forty) we have heard a great deal about the ruination of the countryside by the substitution of wire fences for hedges. But it is clear that England was not always a hedged country. There can have been no such divisions between the fields over which the troopers commanded by Rupert and Cromwell charged upon their opponents The ground on which most of the "battles" of the Civil War were fought would today be impossible for any sort of serious cavalry work. A hunting field can take its jumps or search up and down for a gap or form a queue at a gate, but its only enemy is a solitary animal which is already running away as hard as it can. A squadron of cavalry cannot do these things when there are hostile forces drawn up and waiting for it. Modern England must be country as difficult for cavalry as any in the world.[1] But cavalry charges, even if they were carried out at the trot, as they probably were, were the leading tactical feature of the Civil

[1] It is an interesting fact, from which morals might be drawn, that almost all our generals in the War were nevertheless cavalrymen

War. The hedgerow, which plays so large a part in the English scene today, did not then exist. But, for all that, the hedgerow is something aboriginally English. Did men cease to exist here, the hedges would at once take charge of the deserted fields and usher in the reign of the forest. That process has been described by Richard Jefferies in *After London*:

> The brambles, which grew very fast, had pushed forward their prickly runners farther and farther from the hedges till they had now reached ten or fifteen yards. The briars had followed, and the hedges had widened to three or four times their first breadth, the fields being equally contracted. Starting from all sides at once, these brambles and briars in the course of about twenty years met in the center of the largest fields.
>
> Hawthorn bushes sprang up among them, and, protected by the briars and thorns from grazing animals, the suckers of elm trees rose and flourished. Sapling ashes, oaks, sycamores, and horse-chestnuts lifted their heads. Of old time the cattle would have eaten off the seed leaves with the grass so soon as they were out of the ground, but now most of the acorns that were dropped by birds, and the keys that were wafted by the wind, twirling as they floated, took root and grew into trees. By this time the brambles and briars had choked up and blocked the former roads, which were as impassable as the fields.

For various reasons the hedgerows were kept out of existence for century after century. But a

different way of farming, following the end of the manorial economy and the "open field" system, found a use for it. It was allowed to grow, but within rigid limits. The hedge is indeed a thing that must be rigidly watched or it will take your land from you. There are no more important men in the whole of our agriculture than those whose business it is to keep the hedge under control. For English soil is such that it sprouts vegetation indomitably wherever man will let it alone Even the tips and slagheaps of the industrial districts acquire in the course of time a decent green covering. "What are those plants?" I asked of a man who was taking me over a coal mine near Newcastle. "The sort," he answered morosely, "that you can't keep out of your garden."

So the hedger and the ditcher bulk large in our picture of the English countryside. Remember Kipling's description of the treatment of a neglected hedge:

> They stood back and took stock of the neglected growth, tapped an elbow of hedge-oak here, a mossed beech-stub there, swayed a stooled ash back and forth, and looked at each other.
>
> "I reckon she's about two rod thick," said Jabez the younger, "an' she hasn't felt iron since—when has she, Jesse?"
>
> "Call it twenty-five year, Jabez, an' you won't be far out."
>
> "Umm!" Jabez rubbed his wet handbill on his wetter coatsleeve. "She ain't a hedge. She's all

manner o' trees We'll just about have to——" He paused, as professional etiquette required.

"Just about have to side her up an' see what she'll bear. But hadn't we best——?" Jesse paused in his turn, both men being artists and equals.

"Get some kind o' line to go by." Jabez ranged up and down till he found a thinner place, and with clean snicks of the handbill revealed the original face of the fence. Jesse took over the dripping stuff as it fell forward, and, with a grasp and a kick, made it to lie orderly on the bank till it should be faggoted.

By noon a length of unclean jungle had turned itself into a cattle-proof barrier, tufted here and there with little plumes of the sacred holly which no woodman touches without orders.

This was an unusually elaborate job. More often as we go along the roads we see the hedger doing again, with the same loving hand and precise touch, the work that he has done every year for these twenty years past. Not for him the shears of your suburban gardener at work on the privet hedges. With clean, one-handed strokes he strips away the growth of the season, restores the hedge to her proper shape, brings order and beauty out of chaos. He cleans the ditches of the stuff that grows in, and falls into, them, so that the water may flow away. He trims the grass verge of the roads—for even surfaces which have been made for motorists to drive along would soon suffer if the vegetation were allowed to encroach on them.

The hedge is at once a symbol of the fertility of our land and a symbol of the determination with which the Englishman has turned English nature to his own uses. It is not tamed like a lawn or a garden bed. It is, in all its variety of life, strength dominated and controlled, like the waters of a cataract harnessed in the turbines. It is ready to assert itself again as soon as ever the control is removed.

For these reasons the hedge and the men who trim it do fitly play an important part in the picture of our own countryside. But it is not a universal feature of English scenery. There are indeed many to whom the dry stone wall will seem as characteristic. Let me own that, when I motor west from London to Oxford and beyond, there is a point at which my heart leaps up because I am running alongside the first great stretch of dry stone wall and know by ocular evidence that I am in the Cotswolds at last. In Yorkshire and in Cumberland and Westmorland these walls draw patterns on the vast hillsides which have a strange and memorable beauty. The art of the wall builder (and mender) is comparable to that of the hedger. You may think it is inferior, because he works in stuff that is dead and the hedger in stuff that is very much alive But watch an expert or, better still, try yourself to repair a wall that has begun to fall down, and you will learn that the stones have at any rate life enough in them to stimulate the artist, that they can be uncannily stubborn. Never after that experience

will you be able to think of a dry stone wall as a dead thing or even as a thing that has been tamed.

In landscape, as in poetry, there are many different delights. There are those scenes which impress and appal the human observer by their sheer indifference to him—the deserts and the ice peaks. At the other extreme are the lands which man has enslaved, fat and flat lands where every grain of soil is made to do its duty, irrigated lands, lands artificially fertilized, the market gardens of the world. In between these extremes there is something that might be called the marriage of equals, a marriage between a hardy and daring man and a woman who is as proud as she is healthy, energetic, and beautiful. The two clash and struggle, their life is a conflict, but neither ever obtains an absolute mastery, and they are fundamentally contented without ever being bored.

This is my image of the English landscape. It would be possible to make other images illustrating the characters of the landscapes in other countries. And, I know, my image for England is only my way of framing a panegyric. But it is what I feel when I overlook so much of England as may be seen from the crest of Dover's Hill on the extreme northern slope of the Cotswolds Here are the stone walls, enclosing the cropped pasture land and the little groves of tended trees. The pasture drops abruptly to the plain, where you can see the cherry orchards and the asparagus fields, and the hedged acres of grain and roots stretching as far as sight will carry, with, distin-

guishable amid the foliage clustering round them, the villages which live on the richness of the soil. Through all the landscape there is the equilibrium of forces matched in amicable and fruitful strife.

IV

Our Institutions

In a story by Kipling, which I have already quoted, an American woman asks in bewilderment: "Why is one expected to know everything in England? Why do they never tell?" The answer to that is often that we have never found the words in which to tell, sometimes that we are afraid of killing a reality by imprisoning it in a phrase. But it is bewildering, and not only to foreigners, but sometimes to Englishmen themselves. They, too, are expected to know everything without being told, and they find it more difficult than it is for foreigners to ask questions.

Of nothing is this more true than of our institutions, and especially of the oldest of them. Crown, Parliament, and Church have come down through the ages, changing as they came, without ever being discussed at all by the bulk of the population. Nine out of ten Englishmen today take them for granted, just as did nine out of ten in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, though the things which are taken for granted have meanwhile been transformed.

Of these three great institutions the most important in our public life is Parliament. We have, at a pinch, done without the Crown, though, to

be sure, we did not much like doing without it. But being without a Parliament is to most of the English an unthinkable idea—and I am not here thinking of the constitutional functions of Parliament, as they may be defined by constitutional lawyers. I am thinking of the part it plays in the general background of our lives.

We abuse it, of course. We are accustomed to call it "the Talking Shop," and worse names than that. During the Depression Crisis of 1931 a man in the street was heard to say: "Now there's a chap who would have done us a bit of good if he'd only been let" He was alluding to Guy Fawkes, and his witticism went round the country with general appreciation.

To hear us talk, you would think that a contempt for politicians was one of the most obvious of our national traits. When that fine soldier, General von Lettow-Vorbeck, came to London as the guest of honor at a dinner given by those who had fought against him in the East African campaign, it was thought by some that this was a rather dangerous experiment. Everything, it was felt, would depend on whether his speech was tactfully conceived. When the time came, he rose and said: "My lords and dzhentlemen, I am nod a bolitician. . . ." Those simple words were received with a gust of emotion which assured the success of the evening The General had, as they say, struck a chord.

For this contempt, if it really existed, a good many reasons could be found—the reasons, in fact,

which are usually given. To an impartial eye the Mother of Parliaments is in most of her habits more than a little absurd. I for one can never quite get over the fact that the debating chamber of the House of Commons is not large enough to hold all the members who have been elected to sit there, not even now that the number has been reduced by some fifty or sixty. A Parliament House built in that spirit surely begins with some kinship to a lunatic asylum.

Not that in practice it often matters very much, since most members at most times show a disinclination to sit in the Chamber. They prefer the bars and the smoking rooms, where a moving indicator shows them who is "up" and how long he has been up, though not what he has been saying. From these retreats they periodically issue to take part in divisions, which means that they record their votes by walking through a lobby. This ambulatory process may sometimes occupy as many as three hours of a single sitting. But, when this has just happened, no one is indignant or even amused if a Cabinet Minister declares that a certain subject (divorce, perhaps) is important, but that, owing to the lack of parliamentary time, consideration of it must be postponed.

Minor comic effects, such as the wearing of hats on particular occasions, are harmless and irrelevant eccentricities. But, coldly considered, the way in which the House of Commons contrives not to do what it is wanted to do, and to do what it is not wanted to do, goes beyond the limits of

even an English joke. Any Englishman will tell you that.

Recently I wanted to listen to the debate on the renewal for ten years of the British Broadcasting Corporation's charter. I had some difficulty in getting a seat, which meant that other members of the public were as anxious to be present as I was. And no wonder. When the first charter was granted only a few prescient persons guessed the future of broadcasting. But now it is not guesswork: we know. We know, beyond a peradventure, that in the spheres of propaganda and education there has not been any invention of equal significance since that of printing We know, too, or we should, that the next ten years may be decisive in the development of this potent instrument. If the House of Commons last year debated half a dozen subjects of equal gravity, I should like to know what they were.

But did the members of the House take that view? Not a bit of it: they mostly stayed away. The inadequate benches in that shabby and unimpressive Chamber were on this occasion much more than adequate. It is true that by one of the technical devices in which our Constitution delights it had been arranged that the debate must lead nowhere It was simply a debate on the adjournment, which meant that members could not vote either for or against the granting of the charter: that was none of their business. But it would not have been unreasonable to suppose that they would have welcomed the opportunity of ex-

pressing an opinion on this pregnant topic, if not by speaking, then by applauding or dissenting from the speeches of others.

But not they. those who were present listened in bored silence while one speaker complained of the voices of announcers and another hotly declared that the *Radio Times* ought to be sold for a penny instead of twopence, while the Assistant Postmaster-General, who was the impressive personage in charge of the Government's case, maintained, with what seemed to me like complacent boredom, that everything was all right. This is not what you read in your newspaper next morning, but it is what happened. At least it is what happened while I was there, for I did not stay to the end.

I do not suggest that this is a fair specimen of important debates in the House of Commons. Indeed, part of my argument is that the debate was not given importance on a level with the importance of its subject. Nor do I deny, either, that there are moments when the House rises to its reputation, when its proceedings show signs of life. Nor do I deny that there are good speakers there. But even they do not always speak well, and—there are others There was once a Cabinet Minister who committed an indiscretion in a speech outside the House and, regretting it, alleged that he had been misreported. He was foolish enough to add something about the habitual unreliability of reporters

The members of the Press Gallery then in-

formed him that, unless he publicly withdrew this slander on their profession, they would henceforward report his speeches verbatim, instead of turning them into respectable English. He made the apology that was demanded. And in this context it may be remarked that the House of Commons has never shown much enthusiasm for the oft-made proposal that its proceedings should occasionally be broadcast.

A picture of the effect of House of Commons oratory on one who has to hear a great deal of it is given in a story told to me by a friend who was once a member: for reasons which will soon be apparent I do not say in what Parliament. One day, while a debate was in progress, he was standing at the corner of that curious sentry box which is the Speaker's chair, trying to attract the attention of a colleague. Suddenly he heard the Speaker's voice saying: "My God, is this fellow never going to sit down?" Somewhat startled, he peeped round the corner of the sentry box to see whom the Speaker was addressing. But the Speaker was addressing no one: he was relieving his feelings by talking to himself. My friend decided that it would be worth while to eavesdrop a little longer and presently was rewarded by hearing the weary voice mutter: "The beggar's out of order, but I suppose I'd better let him empty himself." The climax of the soliloquy was reached when the Speaker exclaimed: "Heaven help me, did any man ever have to suffer as I do?"

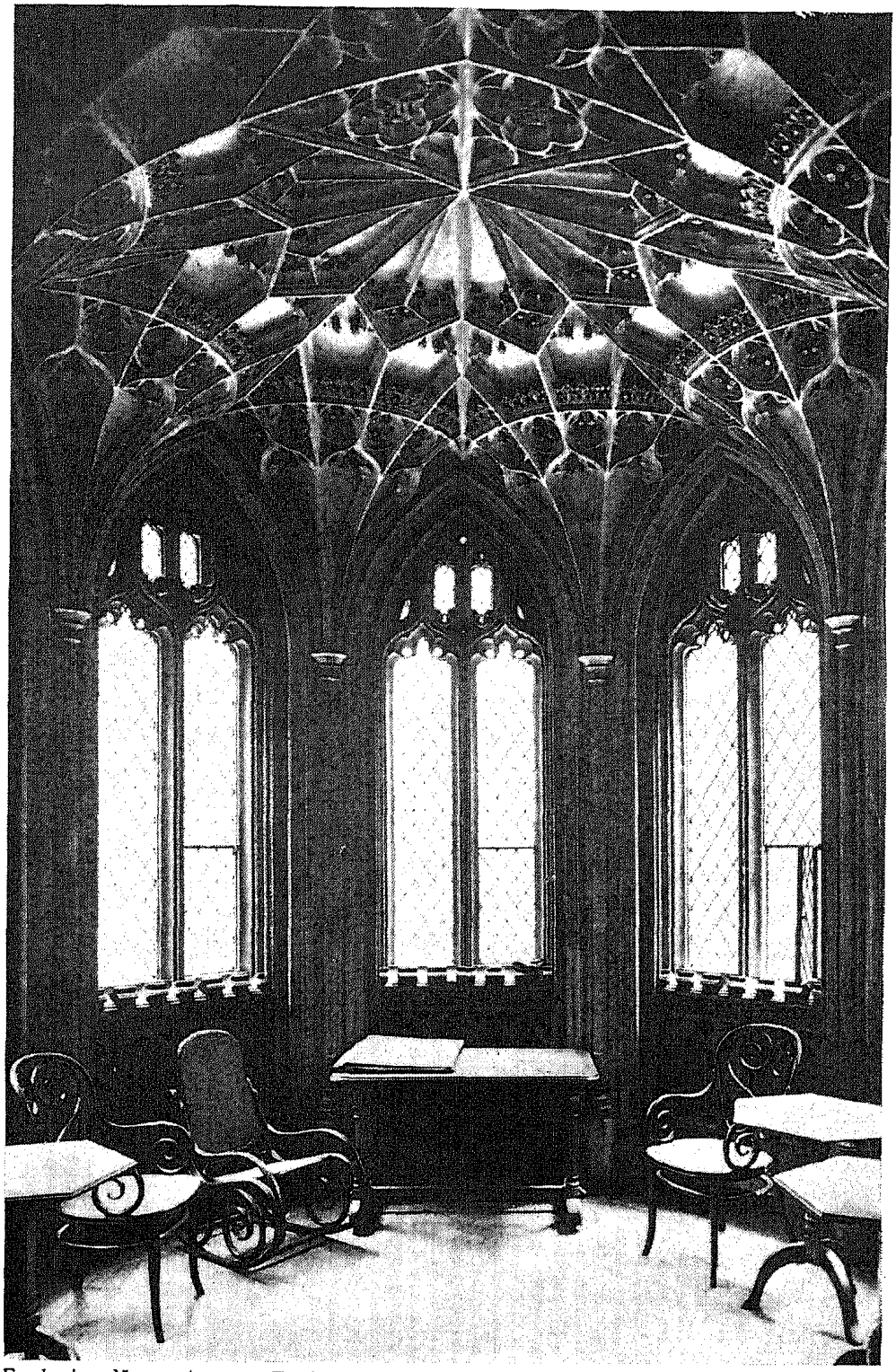
All this is true and, what is more, all English-

men know it to be true and frequently say it. But nothing can shake in their minds the prestige of the House of Commons and those who sit in it, nor can anything shake in the minds of countless thousands a desire, more or less conscious, to sit among them.[1]

This desire is, in the majority of cases, mysterious. To be a member usually means the expenditure of money and always of time. There is not often anything to be made out of it. I should think it fair to say that at no time is more than about a third of the House in the strict financial sense "on the make" Of the remaining four hundred or so, how many can expect to reach the dignities and emoluments of office? Joseph Chamberlain once said in a moment of petulance that the political career was not worth while unless one was going to be Prime Minister. But there seem to be innumerable people who think it worth while, even when they have only the slenderest hopes of ever becoming so much as the humblest Under-Secretary that crawls between earth and heaven

It is still repeated that the House of Commons

[1] As I write these lines, a member of the House of Commons publishes an article in which he details the work done by himself and his colleagues and declares that a good member is worth £1000 a year. A reasonable view, on Sir Arnold Wilson's showing, is that any member must be worth more than that or less than nothing But that is not the point The point is that every true Englishman who reads Sir Arnold's article will shout with laughter, bitter or hearty, according to his mood of the moment, and will yet continue to regard Sir Arnold and the other 614 as somehow superior beings.



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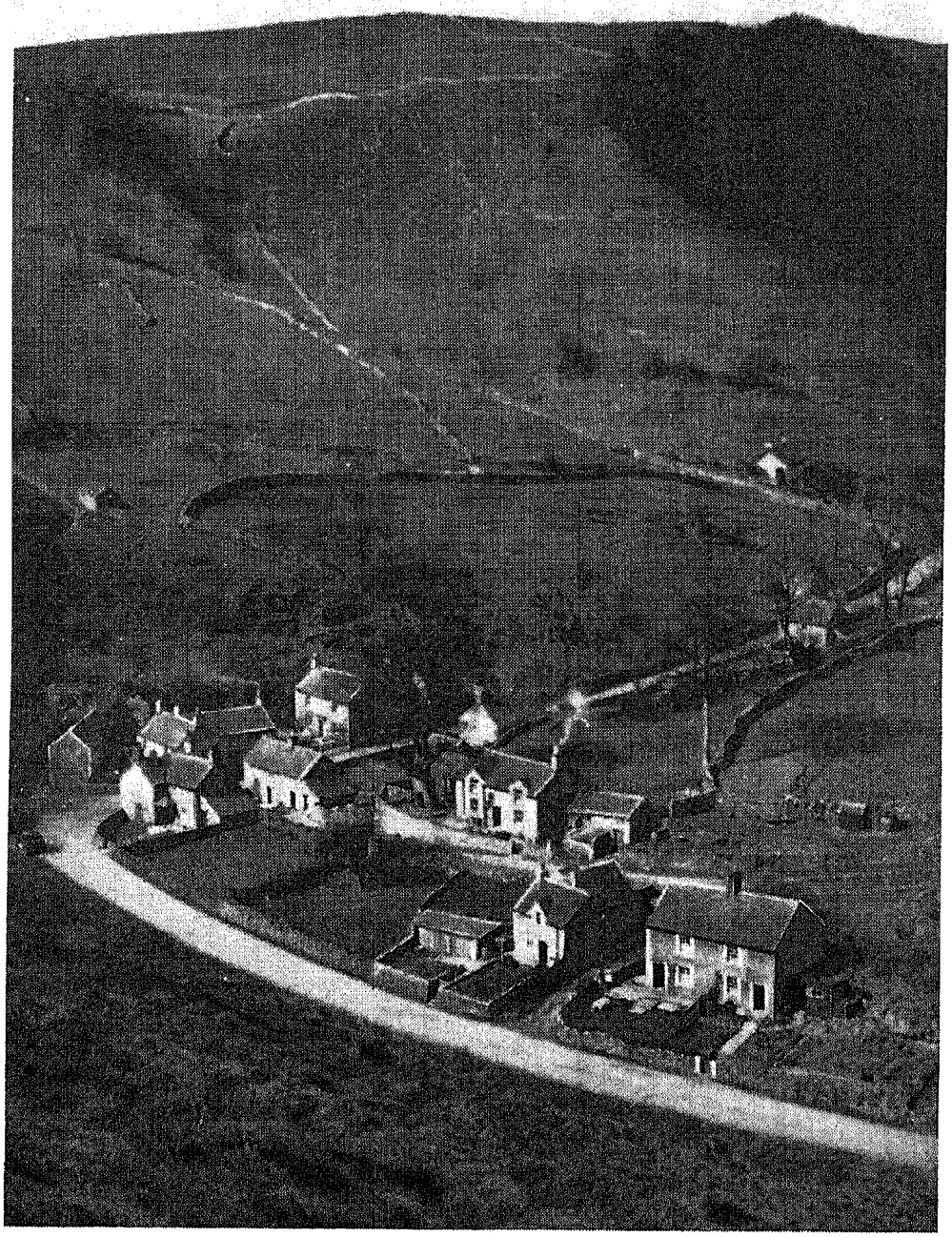
HOUSE OF COMMONS SMOKING ROOM

"The best club in the world."



Courtesy Will F. Taylor.

STONE WALLS

"Patterns on the vast hillsides which have a strange and memorable beauty."

is the best club in the world, which statement, however often it may be repeated, I am free to deny. The food there is no better than may be obtained in several clubs with which I am acquainted and much worse than that of some. The amenities of the bars and smoking rooms are on a level with those of a cloak room in a Tube station.[1] The percentage of bores among the members must be at least as high as in any club that exists anywhere. And what is the joy of being able to invite your friends to strawberries and cream on the Terrace against the pain of having to give the same invitation to so many people who are not your friends, but who might make things difficult for you in your constituency?

Yet there it is—the House of Commons is one of our institutions, and the first of them, and therefore people want to sit in it and, whatever they may say, feel a real respect for those who do. He who does sit in it has established himself as near as anyone can get, without exceptional ability or exceptional luck, to the center of our national life.[2] How well established that center is can be seen from the fact that we know what we do know of

[1] While this book was in process of revision, Sir Philip Sassoon celebrated his elevation from an Under-Secretaryship to the office of First Commissioner of Works by making certain improvements. I have not seen them, but I understand that the comparison should now be with the cloak room of a second-rate picture palace in a very distressed area

[2] Even a candidate, especially in these days when one of the great historical parties boasts of many more candidates than members, shines with a glory of his own Unsuccessful politicians proudly set down in *Who's Who* the fact that they have contested this or that division and been defeated

it, and say what we do say of it, and yet continue to venerate it. Our attitude to it is lyrical rather than logical, like our attitude to the English climate. In it we express our own lyrical rather than logical temper.

There may one day be a revolution in this country, either Communist or Fascist. I think not. I once heard quoted in this context the story of the lady who was living on the East Coast during the War and who was asked whether she was not afraid of the Germans landing. "Not at all," she replied. "But," her questioner persisted, "what do you think would happen if they did?" "What would happen?" she exclaimed. "Why, they'd be put in jail!" The narrator of the story was of the opinion, in which I concur, that if a revolution broke out in England it would be arrested and would go quietly. This was, more or less, what happened to the Chartists in 1848.

But if ever there is a revolution and there is a House which shows collective disrespect to Mr. Speaker and the Mace, then we shall know that there is a fundamental change in England at last. Some years ago a Labor member made a curious attempt to run away with the Mace. He seems to have had a notion that in this way he could stop proceedings to which he had taken some objection. His objection may have been well founded: it is at least even betting that those proceedings were perfectly futile. But the protest was ill-conceived. There followed, in the words of Kipling describing a somewhat similar incident,

"a hush of reprobation that seemed to have the chill of centuries behind it" Even Communists felt that the wretched man had shown a deplorable lack of good form. (He afterwards became a Fascist.)

The moral is that you must not fool about with the Mace, which is the symbol of the House of Commons. Cromwell, it is true, said: "Take away that bauble!" and has sometimes been praised for this evidence of decision, but no Englishman has ever thought better of him for saying it. He had perhaps the most ridiculous House of Commons to deal with that ever sat at Westminster, but he made a mistake, in which we may discover the root of the difficulties with which he never succeeded in dealing. Cutting off the King's head was one thing, but being publicly contemptuous of the Mace was another It was a visible sign of his inability to manage the country in accordance with its own ideas, and that inability was the cause of his eventual failure.

* * *

It will have been observed that I began this discussion by deliberately putting Parliament in the first place and the Crown in the second One of the most important functions of the House of Commons was recently displayed in direct relation to the Crown, and this episode is worth considering for the light it throws on both of these ancient institutions

Let us not beat about the bush—the abdication

of Edward VIII, with all its attendant circumstances, gave a severe blow to the idea of the monarchy in the English mind. There never was, if only one could interpret it aright, a better exhibition of the English spirit than in the three or four months preceding this event. The English are not narrow-minded about their Kings. They were certainly not disposed to be narrow-minded about the present Duke of Windsor. He seemed not to wish to marry and that, said the people, was his own affair. It was equally his own affair how he chose to spend some of his leisure hours, known to be necessarily few. The English were deliberately and carefully uncensorious. Before ever a rumor was heard of the abdication, the name of the lady who was the King's most frequent companion was on every lip. She was discussed not only by smart diners in the Ritz and the Savoy and by reporters in Fleet Street, but also by charwomen in Battersea flats and by furniture-removers in public houses in Tottenham Court Road. But what all these people were saying was not yet a public matter. The family was whispering—that was all. In America everything was printed, in full, with pictures and with deductions. (One surprising thing is the strict accuracy of so much that appeared in the American Press.)

Then an extremely obscure Bishop took the opportunity of a speech at a Diocesan Conference —not usually a very exciting assembly—to say that there were many who wished that the King would show more signs of a godly spirit. He explained

afterwards that what was in his mind was the infrequency of the King's attendance at church services: he seems, at the time when he wrote his speech, to have been one of the eight or nine persons in the Kingdom who had never heard even the name of the King's closest friend. But the sluices were now opened and events came pouring through them

It was in the House of Commons that the decisive event happened. Much as the matter had been discussed, there were very few who really believed that the King contemplated abdication, and when that possibility first appeared the nation felt a great shock. It was grievously troubled: it did not, in the strictest sense of the common phrase, know what to say. And here the House mirrored the nation. Its sympathy was with Mr. Winston Churchill when he pleaded that at all events nothing should be done in a hurry.

What was done was done in a hurry, but there was in the end no serious objection to it. When again Mr. Churchill asked for time, the feeling of the House was as much against him as it had been for him on the previous occasion. In the interval members had discovered what the English as a whole were saying about this lamentable situation So the House supported Lord Baldwin, as he, being what one might describe as a conscious and professional Englishman, had well known that it would, and a very popular King stepped down from the throne amid the sincere

regrets of a people which made no attempt of any sort to keep him on it

This was, looked at coolly, one of the most amazing episodes in our history, and anyone who could interpret its meanings with complete accuracy would be able to say all that need be said of the English in a single page. When it occurred the Crown held a much higher position in public esteem than it has done at some other times. The Crown has sometimes been in the mud George IV, perhaps unjustly, was rather disliked by large numbers of his subjects. William IV was tersely described by Greville as "a very silly old gentleman" and that was his national reputation. Victoria came as a welcome change from George III and his sons, but she made herself unpopular in the affair of Lady Flora Hastings, and by the time of the Crimean War it was possible for the public to credit rumors that both she and her husband had been committed to the Tower on account of acts of disloyalty to their country.

Later in life she became unpopular because of her persistent retirement from public view. At the same time she made her eldest son, the heir to the throne, unpopular by refusing him his fair share of State duties, thus causing him to seem an idler given to those sorts of pleasures of which the Victorian middle-class tended to disapprove. But, as she went on living, her mere longevity began to put the monarchy on a new footing The Victorians were proud of themselves and the

Queen became a symbol of their pride. If she was chary of public appearances, she made two that deeply appealed to her subjects—at the Golden Jubilee of 1887 and the Diamond Jubilee of 1897. Her reign ended amid the disappointments and unresolved doubts of the Boer War. But the accession of her son was just in time to coincide with a changing mood and to express the change. Manners were growing easier and the general mind less censorious. What made Edward VII popular was that he obviously enjoyed himself in ways that anyone could easily understand—a day's racing, for example, or a good dinner. The ordinary man, seeing him thus enjoying himself, warmed toward him and at the same time was inclined to pity him for the hours he must spend in occupations he could not enjoy. Perhaps unnecessarily—for Edward VII was almost the last of the old Kings. An extremely acute observer, the late E. T. Raymond, said:

> One imagines—it is impossible to go further—that these islands never contained a human being more completely satisfied with his position than Edward VII as King. He might be a plain man at bottom; he might have occasional yearning for a plain life. But nobody could see him for three seconds, engaged in the business of a King, without feeling how thoroughly he enjoyed it. It was his trade, and he relished the trade, even in its smallest details. Some details may have bored him, as other men are bored, at one time if not at another, by a business they love but which they find it difficult

to escape. But who shall say what bored him, and when? Before we answer let us recall Johnson's story of the retired tallow-chandler who begged to be allowed to visit the factory—on melting days.

As Lytton Strachey said of Lord Melbourne, Edward VII was an autumn rose. After his time there was not much fun in being a King, especially in England, where everyone, including the King, is expected to know by instinct what a King should be and do, and where no one, not even the King, knows how a King can do wrong until he has done it.

The son of Edward VII had much less than his father's relish in the trade. He considered himself, he said, to be just "an ordinary fellow." That self-judgment was true, so far as it went. But other ordinary fellows do not stand before the world in the same light They can cease to be ordinary in moments of darkness. George V continued the process of rehabilitating the monarchy which had been going on for nearly twenty-five years by a persistence in ordinariness which approximated to genius. To say that he was an adequate figurehead would be grossly to underestimate the part he played in the life of his times. He had to *make* himself a figurehead, and it was not until after the War that the work was properly completed. But he had to take grave decisions even before he was crowned. It may be a long time before we know precisely what George V did to calm the storms which were

raging in our political life when he came to the throne. We do know that those storms were calmed and we know also that the King was obliged, as a lone individual, to perform an act (in this case the giving of a promise to create peers if necessary) the consequences of which would rest on his own shoulders as well as on those of his advisers.

After this came the War, and then King George, like his grandmother, served the institution of monarchy by going on living. He lived through an illness which made his people express to themselves in plain terms what they thought of him. It was a family affair—there is no more to be said about it than that. When the King was pronounced to be out of danger, the thrill of relief which went through the nation was just that which goes through any household when the doctor makes that statement about the head of it.

There is always a particular atmosphere about a man who has emerged from this sort of ordeal. Since the man was a King, this atmosphere reinforced that which naturally surrounds the monarchy. In 1935 we took the occasion of the Jubilee to say aloud, to all the world and to ourselves, how well satisfied we were with the monarchical principle. The King well knew that the fatiguing ceremonies of the Jubilee might shorten his life, but it was an opportunity to complete his work which he could not neglect. Less than a year later he was dead.

His successor flew from the deathbed at Sandringham to his Accession Council, and there was no more characteristic act in his short reign. But now we come to what is really extraordinary. During twenty-five years George V had, on his side, accumulated an enormous amount of popularity for the monarchy. During the same period the Prince of Wales, on his side, had been doing the same thing in a different way. His growth into maturity coincided with those of the picture paper and the cinema. Public men had to evolve a new technique for the public side of their lives and there never was a more public man than he was. Republican nations took a vicarious interest in this bachelor prince. He might marry—and speculation on that subject assumed, for millions of adolescents, a place equal to the place of "Will anyone ever marry me?" This interest was exploited by the Prince's advisers, and perhaps as much by those who did not advise because they were in a position to direct. The Prince of Wales, younger than any Heir Apparent whom the public could remember, and very much a young man of the new generation, was vigorously used to pile up prestige for the monarchy, which astute observers regarded only as being so much useful ballast in the ship. More astute observers, even at the beginning, thought this effort dangerous. It was brittle: the Prince's friends were putting into his hand a sword of glass. That sword would be shown to be breakable the moment that any-

thing arose which could be described, however remotely, as a scandal.

The scandal arose in a way which the prophets of evil had not anticipated. It arose because the Prince, now King, desired to marry a woman of whom his lieges disapproved. It is, happily, not a subject to be discussed here whether they were or were not right in their disapproval. Many of those who acquiesced in the final decision (not that they were given any chance of doing anything else) did so with a bitter regret, but they acquiesced all the same. This King had failed, but there was another to take his place: the Monarchy went on.

The Nine Days' Wonder, as it was called at the time, was truly a wonder, and a very English one. A constitutional transaction without any sort of precedent (since no English King had ever abdicated before save under duress and in obscure circumstances) was carried through without disturbance, almost without passion. A few mobs of young people walked the streets of London that night, shouting with dreary determination: "We want our King!" But they had a forlorn and unconvincing appearance and did but emphasize the general agreement of the nation to accept another monarch. The King whose reign had begun with hopes so high had, beyond argument, determined to render himself unsuitable for his position, and he had to go. It was left to a Scottish Socialist to say that he had been dismissed like an office boy.

The English at large did not think of it in the least in that way. Their attitude truthfully reflected their feeling for the Monarchy as an institution, which may be muddled but is indubitably sincere. What, after all, is the Sovereign in the eyes of the English? The detached observer will tell you that his sole remaining function is to act as an umpire in certain political situations. This function is a real one. Both Edward VII and George V were called upon to exercise it. To both it fell to be asked to create peers, should the need arise, in sufficient numbers to enable a Liberal Government to overcome the opposition of a Conservative House of Lords.

Either King could have decided either way: the appeal to him was not a matter of form, as it is when he is asked to appoint commissioners to say "Le Roy le veult" of a bill which, as a man with a mind of his own, he may not wish at all. Political prophets of those days had to speculate very seriously on the way the royal cat was likely to jump. It is said, though not yet with the justification of proper historical evidence, that George V on two other occasions was called upon to display responsible statesmanship—in the matter of the last Indian Reforms and in the Depression Crisis of 1931.

This, however, important as it may be from the point of view of constitutional law, is not what the Englishman has in mind when he thinks of the Sovereign. The King is to him not an official but a symbol. If the House of Commons symbolizes

our internal liberties, our belief (to put it no higher) that we do govern ourselves, then the King symbolizes our position in the world. To him we look when we are in trouble, be it a war or a general strike or an economic blizzard, not because we expect him as an individual to do anything for us, but because he provides a sort of focus for our wills and our hopes

In the last resort, of course, we value our internal liberties more than our position in the world, and that is why we rank the House of Commons as the more important symbol of the two. But at the same time we judge the one individual by a higher standard than the six hundred odd. There may be something wrong with some of them, but in their corporate capacity they serve well enough The King, as one individual, must have no obvious disability. If he shows one, we are prepared ruthlessly to discard him. Or perhaps "ruthlessly" is wrong. There was any amount of ruth in the English heart during those days, but, when the first astonishment had subsided, no hesitation. That absence of hesitation is well shown by the change in the attitude of the House of Commons to which I have already referred. The country knew in its heart that the King was now in a position in which he could do no right. If he had given up his love in order to keep his Crown, even that, perhaps only half-consciously, would have been held against him. So he abdicated and the English nation demonstrated its phlegm by announcing that the coro-

nation would still take place on the date already arranged, only with another King.

* * *

It is difficult to know just where, in this survey of our institutions, it is right to put that great imaginary which we call the English Constitution. The average Englishman does not think about it as often as one might expect from his habitual use of the words. The place it holds in his mind is different from that held by either the House of Commons or the Crown. He might find it difficult to put into plain words what these institutions mean to him, but in his heart he keeps a just and realistic estimate of them But, if he has anywhere about him an estimate of the English Constitution, it is probably wrong. He thinks, for the most part, that it is a fundamental against which, in fundamental matters, no transitory legislature can prevail.

If we are thinking of the Constitution as a framework of law, he is certainly wrong. The Constitution knows only one rule of law and that is that the King in Parliament can do what he likes. This means that when an Act has been passed by both Houses of Parliament and has received the Royal Assent its provisions become binding on all subjects, and those disregarding them will be liable to such penalties as it may prescribe. Dicey quotes a foreign observer as saying that "it is a fundamental principle with English lawyers that Parliament can do every-

thing but make a woman a man, and a man a woman." And even this does not go far enough. It may be true that Parliament could not secure the actual transmutation of the sexes: it does not, in fact, prevent motorists from exceeding the speed limit in restricted areas. But it could enact, let us say, that every man now resident in Bloomsbury should convert himself into a woman by a certain date, and it could prescribe the death penalty for those who failed to comply with its enactment. So far as law goes, there would be no hope for the victims of this measure. No court could protect them. The utmost any court could do would be to say that, whatever Parliament meant, it had, by some flaw of wording, failed to say it. This would leave it to Parliament to draft its measure anew in unmistakable language.

The absolute power of Parliament has been demonstrated in actions which, to the legal mind, are no less striking than this would be. It can prolong its own existence for as long as it pleases, and within recent times it has exercised that right. In 1910 the electors went to the polls in the belief that they were electing a House of Commons which would sit for at most seven years, at the end of which they would have an opportunity of saying what they thought of it. This Parliament began, ironically enough, by curtailing its own existence to a maximum of five years. But, before the five years were up, it decided that the country could not do without it, and, by its own decision, without being obliged in any way to consult the

electors, it went on until the end of 1918. What Parliament has done already, it could do again, and it could do other and more drastic things. It could, for example, give absolute powers to a dictator with as much celerity as when it arranged the abdication of Edward VIII—that is to say, within twenty-four hours. The lives and liberties of every soul in this country are at the mercy of a machine which consists of three parts: an individual, the Sovereign; a body of persons owing their position either to their birth or to the choice of (nominally) the Sovereign; a body of elected persons, who, if they can secure the assent to this course of the other parts of the machine, need never submit their actions to the judgment of the electorate.

When we put the position thus nakedly, it seems amazing that it can exist in any country which prides itself on the reign of democracy. But another amazing thing is that it works well. And a third amazing thing is the way in which it works.

The strictly legalistic view of the Constitution which I have put forward is perhaps a curiosity rather than a reality of our national life. It could be contended that the present Parliament has no legal basis at all, that all the individuals who hold themselves as composing it, from the King downwards, are so many impostors. When James II fled the country, the declaration that he had thereby abdicated was far from receiving from him the Royal Assent which legal theory demands. On this precedent, the Rural District Council of

Hogsnorton could place the Crown on the head of Mr. Gillie Potter and proceed to act as a sovereign body. The only test of its pretensions would be whether it could or could not command effective obedience. And, if one looks further back, to the accession of, say, Henry VII, the position of James II himself wears a doubtful aspect. Professor C. H. Williams says of Henry's right to the throne, that if the solution of the problem given by the lawyers of the fifteenth century "lacks the beautiful precision of a syllogism, it was at any rate based upon sound common sense, and it could be put into practice."

He continues:

> Parliament proceeded to legislate about the King's title to the Crown. The act which embodied their ideas merely declared that the inheritance of the Crown was, and should remain, in the most royal person of the new sovereign lord, King Henry the Seventh and his heirs. Parliament was very careful not to explain why, and we are thus left with an ingenious solution of all difficulties, by which the decision of Bosworth Field was turned into legal language without so much as a hint that there had ever been such an episode as Bosworth Field.

This was, in its way, another of our national beginnings, the first great manifestation of "sound common sense" in constitutional matters. Of course here, as in the case of James II, it is possible to see an appeal to some law, unwritten but understood, which in the last resort can override the sovereignty of Parliament. But to do that

produces more difficulties than it removes. What happened after Bosworth Field was that the nation felt it had had trouble enough and that Henry Tudor would probably be able to prevent a recurrence of it. In practice, Parliament asserted its right to choose a suitable candidate without a legal claim in preference to one with a better claim but with less obvious fitness for the work. But it rightly felt that any theoretical statement of this claim could lead only to endless and dangerous argument. And it tacitly acted on one of the greatest and most fruitful principles of English public life, which is that, when you establish a precedent, the less you say about it the better.

We have gone on that principle ever since and it has had a rather curious result. Periodically some writer of historical or legal astuteness calls the attention of Englishmen to the fact that their Constitution is not working in the least as they think it does. In 1867 Walter Bagehot surprised his contemporaries by pointing out that:

> The efficient secret of the English Constitution may be described as the close union, the nearly complete fusion, of the executive and legislative powers. No doubt by the traditional theory, as it exists in all the books, the goodness of our Constitution consists in the entire separation of the legislative and executive authorities, but in truth its merit consists in their singular approximation. The connecting link is the Cabinet.

The importance of the Cabinet in our governmental machine is now a commonplace, with

which every school-child who pays attention is made familiar. But it was a new idea then Nevertheless the position of the Cabinet to which Bagehot drew attention had been taking shape for a century and a half before he wrote. The vital precedent from which it arose is supposed to have been set by the fact that George I and his Ministers had no language in common—though I think that, even if George had been able to speak English like an angel, the result would have been the same.

Whatever the vital precedent was, no one said anything about it at the time: its consequences became a part of our national life before any observer clearly discerned them. The same thing has happened since. In 1912 Mr. Hilaire Belloc and the late Cecil Chesterton in *The Party System* described the difference, till then hardly noticed, which has been made in our politics by the modern organization of parties. Only a few years ago the present Lord Chief Justice, Lord Hewart, published a book on what is perhaps the most important constitutional development of our time—the practice of legislation by Order in Council.

The excuse for this practice is simple and plausible. Parliament has not the time to discuss the innumerable small details which are inevitable in legislation for modern needs. It agrees to the broad principles of a measure, but it leaves it to the Minister responsible for the department concerned to say when, how and how far they shall be applied. It does not quite give him a blank

check, but, so to speak, it empowers him to draw up to a certain usually large amount. In practice his powers always turn out to be much wider than anyone (except perhaps the officials of his department) supposed when the Act was passed. Thus if the Minister of Transport decides to forbid any motor vehicle to stand longer in any London street than is necessary to set down and take up passengers, it will not be because Parliament ever contemplated such a regulation, but because he (and his officials) have found that they are enabled to make it by the powers conferred on them by the last statute dealing with motor traffic.

Our first experience of such legislation was during the War, when the national emergency excused almost anything. It is my impression, derived from personal observation in Whitehall, that at first even the permanent officials scarcely realized the extent of the power placed in their hands by the Defense of the Realm Act and similar measures. The more timid and conservative among them said breathlessly, of this application or that, "The public will never stand it!" They soon learned their mistake. The public, during the urgency of those years, was ready to submit to anything which, in the opinion of authority, was necessary. The habit was thus acquired and the stream of legislation by administrative order has flowed merrily ever since. Woe betide the motorist who thinks he can learn what he must and what he must not do by studying what Parliament has said on the subject! But the earliest example,

the first thin trickling of this broad torrent, was found by Lord Hewart as far back as the seventies or eighties. That is where we must look for the precedent of which no one took serious notice at the time when it was established

This is, I repeat, the most important constitutional development of our time and incomparably the most dangerous. It is dangerous because of just that trait in the Englishman which on the whole has made our Constitution work so satisfactorily up to now—his predilection for "sound common sense" and for letting well alone, to save arguments which may lead no one knows where. The system of legislation by administrative order does function with relative smoothness. It is not possible to imagine the members of the House of Commons tramping through the lobbies to decide on every question which has been settled by order under the Road Traffic Acts, to say nothing of a hundred other enactments of less general concern

The danger is that we shall let well alone until it has become ill. There is nothing to prevent Parliament from bestowing on the Cabinet all-embracing powers to legislate in this manner. Both Fascists and extreme Socialists have announced that they desire to use this method. One left-wing Socialist declared that it must be the aim of his party so to scramble the eggs that they could never be unscrambled This might be done by any majority in the House of Commons which could maintain itself long enough to pass the necessary

measure through the House of Lords under the Parliament Act. This majority could then prolong its own life indefinitely and fill up vacancies by co-option instead of by election. Nothing in the law of the Constitution prevents us from falling under the rule of an oligarchy as narrow and severe as that of Venice: the decisive event need be no more than that of a single General Election.

I do not write as an alarmist, because I do not believe that this can ever happen. If there were no other reason, there is this, that no party capable of contemplating such a program is ever likely to win a General Election. If, through some aberration of the public mind, it did, then we could reasonably expect an appeal to an unwritten and imaginary higher law like that which was made after the flight of James II.

But one may, without being an alarmist, point out that changes in the Constitution have taken place without the consent of the generations which unknowingly witnessed them. The English disapproved of the pretensions to uncontrolled power which were entertained by the Stuarts. They would have disapproved as much of the gradual transference of power from the Crown to the Cabinet which was going on throughout the eighteenth century—if they had realized that it was going on. But they did not know, until Bagehot told them, that the transference had been completed And then they realized that they had been living under this system for some time and that

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"The most important constitutional development of our time and incomparably the most dangerous."

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LORD BRAMPTON

"That fine Englishman, much better known as Mr. Justice Hawkins."

they were still living—at that time, as it happened, fairly prosperously

We are an easygoing people, with much to occupy and content our minds, and it is one of our weaknesses that we tend to acquiesce in the accomplished fact, provided we are told with sufficient authority that it has been accomplished. The violent (if strictly constitutional) revolution which I have outlined above would, in sum, have the effect only of subjecting us to a bureaucracy, since a cabinet with dictatorial powers would have to govern through the Civil Service. We might easily be so subjected without a revolution by—

> Slavery slowly broadening down
> From precedent to precedent.

Again let me say that I do not think that will happen.

* * *

If it does not happen it will be because we could not produce here a Civil Service which does not share the national character. Sir William Harcourt said that the only important function of the political head of a department was to tell the permanent officials what the public would not stand. A permanent official of experience as well as of wit once said to me, when I quoted this remark: "If Harcourt were alive today, he'd find nothing to do. He wouldn't be able to think of anything that the public won't stand"

Only slowly and confusedly is the public waking up to this view of the matter. As usual, it

thinks of the Civil Service in terms of something that is no longer there—just as when we say "That is Sirius": the light which prompts the exclamation came many years ago from a star that may conceivably have ceased to exist in the interval. The Englishman's view of Whitehall is still tinged by what he has read in Dickens about the Circumlocution Office:

> This glorious establishment had been early in the field, when the one sublime principle involving the difficult art of governing a country was first revealed to statesmen. It had been foremost to study that bright revelation, and to carry its shining influence through the whole of the official proceedings. Whatever was required to be done, the Circumlocution Office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving—HOW NOT TO DO IT.

He still supposes Government offices to be peopled with the characters whom Mr. Arthur Clennam encountered:

> The Barnacle family had for some time helped to administer the Circumlocution Office. The Tite Barnacle branch, indeed, considered themselves in a general way as having vested rights in that direction, and took it ill if any other family had much to say to it. The Barnacles were a very high family, and a very large family. They were dispersed all over the public offices, and held all sorts of public places. Either the nation was under a load of obligation to the Barnacles, or the Barnacles were under a load of obligation to the nation. It was not quite

unanimously settled which—the Barnacles having their opinion, the nation theirs.

This once accurate picture lived on, in a farcical form, into our own time. Among the gay pre-war writings of Mr. A. A. Milne, I find one which begins thus:

> It was three o'clock, and the afternoon sun reddened the western windows of one of the busiest of Government offices. In an airy room on the third floor Richard Dale was batting. Standing in front of the coalbox, with the fire shovel in his hands, he was a model of the strenuous young Englishman; and as for the third time he turned the Government india-rubber neatly in the direction of square-leg, and so completed his fifty, the bowler could hardly repress a sigh of envious admiration. Even the reserved Matthews, who was too old for cricket, looked up a moment from his putting and said: "Well played, Dick!"

But, long before Mr. Milne wrote this, a revolutionary change had begun. If we continue to look to fiction for a reflection of life we shall see the first signs of it in Anthony Trollope, who was himself an able and useful public servant. The unamiable and unhappy Mr. Crosbie in *The Small House of Allington,* when he was made Secretary to the Commissioners at the General Committee Office, knew that "he had really been promoted because he knew more about his work than any of the other men, and Lady de Courcy's influential relation at the India Board had not yet even had time to write a note upon the subject." Trollope

thus describes the things for which he himself worked during his own term of service in the Post Office:

> That the public in little villages should be enabled to buy postage stamps; that they should have their letters delivered free and at an early hour; that pillar letter boxes should be put up for them (of which accommodation in the streets and ways of England I was the originator, having, however, got the authority for the erection of the first at St. Heliers in Jersey); that the letter carriers and sorters should not be overworked; that they should be adequately paid, and have some hours to themselves, especially on Sundays; above all, that they should be made to earn their wages; and latterly that they should not be crushed by the damnable system of so-called merit—these were the matters by which I was stirred to what the secretary was pleased to call energetic performance of my duties.

In the course of these remarks he says also that "a man who takes public money without earning it is to me so odious that I can find no pardon for him in my heart."

Trollope may serve as an example of the new type of Civil Servant which was coming into existence during these years. I do not know what he means by "the damnable system of so-called merit," but it seems probable, in the light of Trollope's character, that the epithet "so-called" was justly applied. A real system of merit was, however, being established.

This was not due to any large-mindedness or

long-sightedness on the part of the politicians who established it. They had no choice. The population continued to grow and the problems of national life became every day more complex. The Minister who continued to rely on the Tite Barnacles would have had nothing to expect but a series of muddles, each the potential breeding-ground of scandals, which must have led in the end to his own irretrievable disgrace. In 1855 the examination system was first introduced, and in 1870 the principle of open competition.

It is not to be supposed that there were no good Civil Servants before these reforms. Trollope himself never sat for an examination: his place was "begged" for him, in the good old fashion, by one of his mother's friends whose father-in-law "then ruled the Post Office." But the good Civil Servants now began to get a better chance, and arrangements had been made for a more copious supply of good Civil Servants.

The sapient gentlemen who brought all this about had not the smallest idea of whither it would lead. But to us, looking back, it seems clear that they were a crew of political Frankensteins. You cannot introduce into all the offices of Whitehall young men ambitious enough to sit for examinations and able enough to succeed in them and then expect them merely to do efficiently what the Tite Barnacles did inefficiently. The new Civil Servant, like Harry Hotspur, wanted work, and, little by little, but with increasing success, he saw that it was provided for him. He saw a country that

in a great many respects needed a good tidying-up.

It has been held, and, indeed, in order to call attention to this problem, I have strongly expressed the view, that, with the introduction of open competition for the Civil Service, democracy's game was finished. The arguments for this view are excellent. The political head of a department in whose hands authority nominally lies is at a fatal disadvantage compared with his bureaucratic subordinates. They are paid to sit in their offices and do their work day after day. He has to spend many hours of his working week in the House of Commons and other hours in his constituency (which has been rendered vastly larger by the electoral laws of the last twenty years) making sure that it shall remain faithful to him. If it does not (which may result from no fault of his own), the career to which he has given himself may be interrupted for an indefinite time.

The permanent official's career is subject to no such breaks. If he has at heart some project of reform, then a change of administration is only a welcome opportunity for tactfully presenting it again. Sooner or later he will find it possible to convince for long enough the transitory person who takes responsibility in Parliament. All this side of the question was presented in a beautiful little picture only the other day by Mr. Winston Churchill in a speech at a dinner to Sir Edward Marsh. Mr. Churchill recalled the occasion of his induction into his first office, that of Under-

Secretary for the Colonies. Sir Edward, who had been private secretary to the former incumbent, was presented to his new chief, and "Ah," he said (according to Mr. Churchill), "you're my new Under-Secretary."

All this side of the question can very easily be exaggerated or caricatured. But when allowance has been made for exaggeration and when we see the caricatures in the proper light, there remains the fact that most of the strings of government in England are in the hands of the Civil Service. (Strings, not reins—it is nothing so simple as a pair of reins.) All that stands between us and the tyranny of these carefully examination-selected persons is that they, too, are English and have a collective intuition of how far they can safely go. They rank with Parliament in our machinery of government. And with them should be associated the Town Clerks and other municipal officials who all over the country also act as the expert advisers, and monitors, of elected persons.

* * *

But we have by no means as yet described the whole of the fabric of English public life. Indeed the most elusively difficult part of the whole intricate pattern has still to be considered. I mean that mysterious, indefinable but real institution which we call "the governing classes," and which includes both Parliament and the Civil Service, but extends beyond them. And let me say here and now, that if any person who is not English

can make head or tail of what I am going to say about the governing classes, he probably knows as much already about England as any foreigner can ever hope to do.

People will tell you that no such institution any longer exists Do not believe them What they generally prove to mean, when they are cross-examined, is that persons with an educated accent cannot today rely on specially tender treatment from the police if they happen to get into any sort of trouble in the public street This is because there are now too many people with an educated accent for it to be a sign of distinction And there are also many members of the governing classes whose accent is anything but educated. For, while our governing classes do not relax their hold on our national life, they continually change.

The ease with which the change is effected is the most obvious thing observable about this institution. Even in the Middle Ages the English nobility was not an exclusive order. William atte Pole, a rich merchant of Hull, died there in 1329. In 1385 his grandson, Michael, became the first Earl of Suffolk. A little more than a century after William had taken his last complacent look at his ledgers, his great-grandson was a duke. Another century had not elapsed before his lineal descendants included among them a pretender to the throne.

The case of the Poles is perhaps exceptional in the rapidity with which they mounted the ladder of the noble degrees. It is not exceptional in

anything else. The Howards carried to the position of the Premier Dukedom a name reminding us that the founder of their line was responsible for the welfare of the manorial pigs. I am not disposed to accept the well-meant efforts of genealogists and etymologists to prove that "Howard" means anything but "Hog-ward"—or, as we should say on a modern farm, pig-man. The suggestion that it was derived from the Saxon name of Hereward is derisory.

The process continued rapidly during the centuries after the Poles and the Howards had come into prominence. Talents for administration and acquisition produced a plentiful crop of "new men" under the Tudors. It went on in the eighteenth century until it reached the frank declaration of the younger Pitt that, in his opinion, every man with £10,000 a year ought to be in the House of Lords. Pitt acted on his belief with the result that an appreciable section of what we call our old nobility draws its blood from successful nabobs and lawyers.

Our old nobility is largely a fraud, to which marriages of heiresses and changes of name have contributed. Let me set down here, in the words of the *Encyclopædia Britannica,* the truth about the present Dukedom of Northumberland:

> On the duke's death in 1750 his earldom of Northumberland passed under a special remainder, with the main inheritance of the Percys, to Sir Hugh Smithson, bart (1715-1786), who had married his daughter and eventual heiress in 1740 and was

created Duke of Northumberland and Earl Percy in 1766. From this marriage descends the present ducal house, which bears the name of Percy in lieu of Smithson

I quote from this source for the sake of the eloquent impassiveness of the last sentence—and also because it throws a high light on one of the few memorable remarks attributed to George III. Sir Hugh, shortly after becoming Duke of Northumberland and a Percy, asked the King for the Garter and was refused. He protested that he was the first Duke of Northumberland who had begged for this distinction and had been denied "By Gad, sir!" cried the King, "you're the first Smithson that ever had the impudence to ask for it!" The point of this story is that the Hanoverian line did not even then understand the English system of co-option and absorption.

It is this system which has made and kept our governing classes what they are. Do not let me convey to you the impression that they are to be thought of in terms of wealth and titles. Wealth is a good qualification. It is equivalent to being able to find the requisite backing for candidature for the club: it does not in itself insure that the candidate will be elected. If the candidate is a peer, he is almost certain of election, but that does not mean that he will be admitted to the inner life of the club until he has proved himself worthy. But the son of a Durham pitman, educated at an elementary and a secondary school and, with the

help of scholarships, at Balliol or King's, may slide into the sacred swimming pool with hardly a visible effort.

This sort of transition has become more frequent of late years, since County Councils began to assist promising boys with scholarships at the older Universities.[1] It was never unknown, but in earlier times it was usually less abrupt and it often carried with it an entire family. Some competent tradesman made a modest fortune and, with that behind them, his children and his grandchildren established themselves among the governing classes. But let us particularly note that it did not necessarily carry the family into the zone of great wealth or great honors. The Arnolds, the Butlers, and the Pollocks are three families which spring at once to the mind when one thinks about the governing classes.

They spring at once to the mind precisely because they have never reached the highest places. In spite of that, there is always one of them about, somewhere or other. The first Arnold was an Oxford don, to whom, when he was twenty-eight, was offered the headmastership of Rugby. Educational changes were in the air, he was a man of character and had a genius for organization, and he became the founder of our public-school system. Matthew Arnold was one of his sons

[1] In 1936, out of 790 entrance scholarships and exhibitions offered for open competition by colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, 374 were won by candidates from State-aided secondary schools Out of these 374 successful candidates, over 60 per cent had begun their education in the elementary schools

Mrs. Humphry Ward, in whose novels one can find an excellent picture of the governing classes as they existed in late Victorian times, was one of his granddaughters. The Arnold blood passed into the Huxley family and has helped to produce Mr. Julian Huxley and Mr. Aldous Huxley—and the prestige of the two combined families *helped* to give these two brilliant men a start in life.

The Butlers began, so far as important history goes, with a headmaster of Harrow. This headmaster, so his son once told me, had the task of breaking the news to one of the boys under his charge that his father had been assassinated in the lobby of the House of Commons. The boy was the son of Spencer Perceval, who was then Prime Minister. The Dr. Butler whom I knew was in his turn headmaster of Harrow for twenty-six years and then Master of Trinity for thirty-two years more.[1] One of his sons by his first marriage was a house-master at Harrow. Two by his second marriage were Presidents of the Cambridge Union, and one of these was later one of the members of Parliament for Cambridge University. His elder brother was Canon of Winchester and husband of the famous Josephine Butler, whose work on the problem of prostitution opened the way to a new treatment of it. The same family has provided also another member of Parliament for Cambridge University (who earned a knighthood

[1] The son of the present Master of Trinity has just followed his father in winning the Nobel Prize for Physics.

by his work during the War) and a Governor of Burmah.

Of the Pollocks it was said, I presume by someone who envied them their success, that they all looked like horses, but that they *were* asses. Certainly there is a remarkable facial resemblance in all the outstanding members of the family, but I refuse to subscribe to the second half of the statement. The Pollocks have produced an Attorney-General who became Chief Baron of the Exchequer, another who was later Master of the Rolls, a Bishop, an extremely lively and illuminating writer on cricket, a Dean of a Cambridge college, and an eminent authority on the history of English law. The first Pollock was a successful saddler with a shop in the neighborhood of Charing Cross toward the end of the eighteenth century.

I hope that the contemporary representatives of these families will not take ill what I have said about them, for it would be no joke to have all the Arnolds, Pollocks, and Butlers all at once on one's trail. But they can hardly take it ill, since I cite them here as emblems of England's continuity, as specimens of the governing classes which have made England what she is.

The very existence of the governing classes is an example of our inarticulate, unreasoned common sense in the management of affairs. We have, without thinking about it very much, contrived to create a lesser aristocracy which has no heritable privileges and relatively little heritable

wealth. What makes it an aristocracy is the fact that its members have a hereditary, if limited, right to opportunity. They must have talents of their own. They must take opportunity when it comes, show themselves worthy of it, make good use of it. They must not be drones, but neither need they be drudges. They work, but they can count on the best conditions for what they can do best.

A generation in which one of these families produces no one of ability does not greatly matter. A second barren generation is often fatal, since its progeny will find itself unprovided with the right connections. But meanwhile the gap in the order has been filled by a new family.

A South Shields boy has shown promise in the local elementary school, has gone thence with a scholarship to the Grammar School, and thence again with another scholarship, or perhaps two or three, to Trinity or Magdalen. His brilliance persists and increases, and, by way of his tutor or the Master of his college, he comes into contact, at the breakfast table and the dinner table, with members of the governing classes. We will suppose (indeed we must suppose) that he is a young man who knows how to adapt himself, to make the best of himself, to assert himself without evident lack of modesty. Some of those whom he has met remember him.

Now he has to jump another fence with no help but that of his own legs He sits for the examination for the Home Civil Service and passes high

on the list. Those who remember him mention the fact. He enters the Service as a marked man. He is given the opportunity to deserve early promotion and he does in fact deserve it. He becomes permanent head of his Department, a person whom junior Ministers rather fear and whom Cabinet Ministers respect. Let us suppose that his son also shows signs of brilliance—in what direction it does not matter. Can we suppose that the father's connections have no influence on the son's opportunities? Of these elements is our governing class made up, and thus is it recruited. On the whole, it works well.

From all this argument I have omitted the Church, partly because I shall have to write about it in a different context later, partly because it is ceasing to be a channel through which the second generation makes its way into the governing classes. Too often nowadays the children of the clergy start under a disadvantage as compared with the children of a miner on the dole; the position of their fathers forbids them the benefits offered by the elementary school. But perhaps before long the children of the clergy will have ceased to exist. An eminent Anglo-Catholic once offered to me the opinion that in the long run one grave difference between Rome and Canterbury would be removed by natural causes. There would be, he thought, no more dispute about the married priest because no priest of the Church of England would be able to afford to marry.

But I am diverging here from the subject of the

institutions by which we are governed to the more intimate, closer-grained subject of our social life. Perhaps this chapter should include something about the Church of England, since, as by law established, it is obviously an institution. But I hardly know what to say about it under this head. Some years ago it sought to revise its own Prayer Book. The attempt was defeated by the House of Commons after a debate, in which the most effective speech in opposition was made by a Scottish Presbyterian, and a division, in which an adverse vote was recorded by a Parsee. More recently, in the question of divorce, the Church, in the person of the Archbishop of Canterbury, has given a remarkable display of non-leadership. If anyone can understand Dr. Lang's speech in the House of Lords on the new Matrimonial Causes Act, I am not he. But there is one fact which I perfectly apprehend and which is equally well apprehended by more persons than the Church seems to know. It is that the Church of England has for years flatly and flagrantly defied the law of the land regarding the remarriage of divorced persons, while holding steadfastly to the laws which confer on it the privilege of establishment. I strongly hold that, like other religious bodies, it has the right to make its own rules for the admission to, and expulsion of, individuals from its communion. It ought to have demanded that right in plain terms and long ago. But if it had done so, it would have been obliged to make certain commonsense concessions in return. Unwilling to make

the concessions, it has sneaked the right and has forfeited the serious consideration of England. It ranks no more among our governing institutions It remains, in many parts of the country, as an element in everyday life.

Let us return to those governing institutions, of which I have tried here to make a picture. The picture is, I know, fragmentary and confused, but that reflects the nature of the problem The only justification for the English way in most things is that it seems to work in defiance of all probabilities. The machinery is loose and easy, and when it does something to which you take objection you find it hard to fix the responsibility. In 1931, when the Labor Government fell and the National Government took its place under the same Prime Minister, some indignant persons on the Labor side sought to fix the responsibility on the Crown itself But they were unable to show that anything had been done which was outside the wide and elastic provisions of what we call the Constitution

So with the institution of the governing classes. It works with a useful elasticity When Mr. Julian Huxley was appointed Director of the Zoological Gardens there were, I daresay, other candidates whose supporters felt that a wrong choice had been made. But Mr. Huxley is a brilliant man and his appointment is assuredly not indefensible. No one can say that he owes it to his membership in a legally privileged class. The privilege of his class exists only in practice,

where there is no ground for argument. In theory it has no existence at all

I apologize to Mr. Huxley for taking him as an example. For all I know there was no other candidate to take the field against him, and the whole business was settled before any vote was taken. That is the way we usually do things I may, perhaps, cite two instances which have come under my notice—roughly speaking, two sides of the same incident.

There is a friend of mine who is a member of a Board of Governors which makes the appointment to an important professorship, one of those professorships the holder of which is by way of being a public figure. The office fell vacant, and one day it so happened that my friend, having lunched with me, had to go on to a meeting of the Board. As I tipped him out of our taxi, he said: "I think this will be interesting."

It was, but not quite in the way he expected. Later he described the proceedings to me. They were brief. A resolution was proposed for the appointment of a subcommittee to choose a suitable candidate whose name would then be put before the whole Board. My friend in his innocence suggested that it might be better if the subcommittee were to give the Board two or three names to choose from. The suggestion was followed by an awkward silence. At last, in a rather pained voice, the Chairman said· "You see, I don't think the man we want would let his name go forward if there were to be any competition."

In fact, the new professor had already been chosen behind the scenes, and even the appointment of the subcommittee was only a formality.

But the proper observance of the formalities is exceedingly important, as my second instance shows. It concerns another professorship which was offered to a certain distinguished man. He expressed his willingness to accept it. "Then," he was told, "you must send in an application." "I won't," he replied indignantly. "I'm not going to make an application that may be refused. Besides, I intend to make conditions, and I should have put myself in a false position." "The application will not be refused," was the answer, "but it must be made. That is the proper way of doing things." There ensued a deadlock which was fatal to that candidature. In my judgment that distinguished man was wrong. He did not understand the English way of settling important matters informally but behind an imposing façade of formality.

V

Law, Order, Religion, and Morality

At the beginning of this chapter I must put a story of a young man I once met who had spent three or four years of his life as a gangster in America. He had been educated at Borstal and Dartmoor and, when I met him, had just been doing a post-graduate course in an American prison, which was followed by deportation. He had returned not quite empty-handed to his native country and had set himself up in an honest business, which, he hoped, would give him a safer if less ample livelihood. He said that, were he disappointed in this, he would return to crime.

"But," he added earnestly, "not here. It's not good enough here. I shall go back to the States. You see," he went on, "over there, when we held up a bank, I was the stick-up man. I used to go in with a couple of automatics and say to the clerks: 'Stick 'em up!' Everything depends"—here he became more earnestly explanatory than ever—"on how you say it. If you do it just right, they stick 'em up, and you can hear the manager shouting from his office: 'All right, boys, the money's insured,' and you don't have to shoot. I *never* had to shoot. But over here, I don't know what would be the right way to say it. They'd

laugh and start chucking ledgers at you, and the whole thing would be a mess-up"

This, however much you may discount it on the ground that it comes from an English mouth, is a pretty high tribute to the common sense of the Englishman's attitude toward crime. It is only very rarely that we can take the wrongdoer with complete seriousness. We laugh and chuck ledgers at him, and the laughter spoils his pose and the ledgers are usually well enough aimed to spoil his shooting.

Our normal attitude, except in cases of cold-blooded murder or of exceptionally callous violence, can best be described as one of tolerant strictness. We deal with the offender effectively, but without rancor. We are by nature clement within reason. It is true that we once had an extremely savage penal code, of which we are now ashamed. It contained over two hundred offenses punishable by hanging, and it was not until the nineteenth century was well advanced that these were reduced to four. Humanitarians pleaded for reform and reinforced their pleadings with admirable arguments, but the real driving force was supplied by those representatives of the common people who sat on juries. Their method was irrational but effective. They simply refused to convict, no matter what the evidence, in cases where hanging was to be the punishment for such crimes as theft The forces of law and order dealt with this in their own equally irrational way. Whenever it was possible they reduced the nom-

inal value of the stolen object to a point at which the death penalty was not involved. Thus they were able to secure a conviction and a sentence of some kind (generally still pretty severe), even if it meant solemnly valuing a piece of gold plate at 4s. 11d. In due time, the law overtook reality and the reign of reason was restored.

I foresee a time when juries will in like manner compel the law to make a distinction, which at present it fails to make, between degrees of murder. Not so long ago juries were almost too anxious to convict in murder trials and there was at least one nasty miscarriage of justice I refer to the case of John Norman Holmes Thorne, who lost his patience with his fiancée and knocked her down with a blow that happened to kill her. He then cut her into pieces, which he buried in his chicken-run, and after this interment had been discovered, carried on his suicidal work by telling a number of quite fatuous lies about the manner of her death. Even if we accept without question all the evidence offered by the prosecution, there is still not so much as a suggestion that he intended even at the moment to kill the girl, still less that he had schemed to kill her.

The mind of the jury, and (I believe) that of the prosecution as well, was confused by a case which had occurred only a little while before, in which also a man had killed an inconvenient woman and had tried to dispose of her body by cutting it up. But what damned Patrick Mahon was proof that he had made arrangements for the

dissection while the woman was still alive. Anything like this was lacking in Thorne's case. The jury, however, just as juries had done when they refused to send people to be hanged for theft, had expressed an opinion rather than brought in a verdict. Their opinion was that this business of hitting inconvenient women over the head and then cutting them up ought to be stopped. It should be remembered that it all happened not long after the War, when there was much talk of the violent habits which men had learnt in the trenches and which were likely to persist in civil life.

There can be no doubt that the good men and true, now often assisted by a certain number of women, do introduce a certain amount of the "play" (by which I mean flexibility) into our legal system, which is one of its most notable characteristics. Sometimes the flexibility stretches the law in the right way, but sometimes in the wrong, as happened with the unlucky Thorne. Since Thorne's case, juries have tended to swing in the opposite direction Where neither a lethal weapon nor poison has been used in a murder, but only the bare hands or some handy domestic implement, they now want a good deal of evidence of the circumstances before they will bring in a verdict of guilty. That verdict means a hanging and they want to be satisfied that the prisoner should be hanged. Failing satisfaction, they prefer to let him go free altogether, though there are cases in which it has seemed at least probable

that, if they could, they would have returned a verdict of murder in the second degree. Very often the one alternative open to them, that of manslaughter, is one they do not understand. Few people do, and of the few I am not one. The crime of manslaughter is one of the most striking examples of the flexibility of our working system. The other day a man was tried for murder, for which he would have had to be hanged, and convicted of manslaughter, for which he might have been sentenced to a good many years of imprisonment. He was bound over to keep the peace for a definite period. He had, like Thorne, lost his temper with his girl and, so to speak, dotted her one—fortunately for him, in the presence of witnesses. This seems to be a rather wide range of possibilities—but then we like to have a wide range of possibilities so that we can deal with the individual case on its merits.

The mere existence of the jury creates a wide range of possibilities, not all of them alluring. The view the law takes of it is simply expressed. Before motorists were compelled to insure against third-party risks, it was, in a running-down case, not allowed to be mentioned in court that the defendant was insured. If, by some mischance, the fact were slipped out in the jury's hearing, the case was stopped, the jury dismissed and a new jury impaneled. The plain inference was that the palladium of our liberties could not be trusted to treat a presumably rich corporation with ordinary fairness.

There seems to me, however, to be today a more serious objection to the jury system. It held its place in English law, was one of the most characteristic and valuable of our institutions, because it was what some of the earliest documents describe it as being—"a jury of the neighbors." The twelve good men and true already knew something about Tom in the dock, Dick who was giving evidence against him, and Harry who was giving evidence in his favor. They listened to the rules of evidence as expounded to them and to the judge's summing-up, but, as a rule, they needed none of these things. They knew that Dick had had a grudge against Tom about that goose since seven years come Michaelmas, or perhaps that Harry was a kindly man who would put in a good word for anyone if he were asked in the right way. This is, let us put it, how affairs are settled now in a business concern where a blunder has been made and there is a question of someone being sacked for it. It was always possible that someone in the jury would have as bad a grudge against Tom as Dick, or be as absurdly merciful a man as Harry. But that was a chance which no system could easily avoid. The twelve good men and true had this merit that they not only knew these three characters, but also knew the sort of lives they lived.

Take a modern contrast. The jury consists of (1) a Civil Servant, living in Kensington, who is extremely angry and impatient because his work is falling behind for a day or so; (2, 3, and 4)

wives of professional men living in various suburbs, who are partly frightened, partly excited, by this novel experience; (5) the woman manager of a Shaftesbury Avenue dress shop, who has seen a good deal of sharp practice in her life and is pretty confident that she can recognize it wherever she sees it; (6) a retired bank manager, who is being prevented from attending the meeting of the local tennis club; (7)—but need I go on? The case these six and the unenumerated other six have to consider has arisen out of a quarrel between Sam and Gus Sam and Gus have hitherto been known to a large number of persons (not one of whom is a member of the jury) as responsible for the running of a coffee stall. Sam says that the coffee stall is his and that Gus is his assistant. He further accuses Gus of having falsified the accounts and robbed the till. Gus, on his side, says that they were partners, he having put down five pounds ten when they joined up together. What he took out of the till was only his just share, and, if it was more, it was only what Sam had done often after a bad week with the bookies, and he had been going to put it back. There is no record of any original agreement and the accounts are chaotic, besides being splashed with coffee and egg.

Now not one member of the jury knows any more about the lives and conventions of coffee-stall keepers than he knows about the marriage customs of the Solomon Islanders. He has no idea whether the coffee-stall business is usually run on

these lines or not. (*I* don't know: possibly it is.) He has never seen Sam or Gus before, or anyone like either of them, except, of course, as he may have passed them in the street. He sees and hears them now, in unnatural circumstances. The chances are, in the particular circumstances that I have outlined, that he and his colleagues will acquit. It does not follow that justice will have been done. There is also a chance that, having misunderstood some phrase in evidence which conveys a definite and different meaning to those who understand the lives of coffee-stall keepers, they may convict. No one is entitled to ask a jury why in hell it brought in that verdict, though a judge is entitled to tell the jury that it made a wicked mistake in bringing it in and even to penalize it for doing so—by not releasing it at the end of the case. It follows that the verdict stands and that all the consequences must ensue, even though a little questioning might lead to the exclamation: "Is *that* what he meant?" and a complete reversal of opinion.

For my part, I take an unfriendly view of the palladium of our liberties, which has survived into a time not suited to it. If you could insure the impaneling of twelve men (or women) good and true who had some personal familiarity with the ways of life of the parties and their witnesses, then the jury system would continue to give our legal system that degree of "play" which any human institution needs. It would make some wrong decisions, but it would reduce the likelihood of

them as much as we can hope under any system. But that is a thing you cannot now insure. There are too many people, and they have developed too many different ways of life. I have heard a candid barrister say that in his opinion the most efficient tribunal in the world is a court-martial, because all the people concerned understand the conditions under which the accused and the witnesses live and work.

The professional lawyer already takes this view of the jury system. There has been, during recent years, a determined effort to push it out of the civil side of our judicial machinery. On the criminal side, an eminent lawyer has said: "If I am guilty give me a jury; if I am innocent, for Heaven's sake give me a judge sitting alone."

We ought to observe these things with attention. It might be said that, as with the House of Commons, we ridicule the law but also pay great respect to it. But I think it would be a great mistake to suppose that we pay as much respect to it as we do to the House of Commons. There is a crisis brewing in the law of England. It is all very well for the lawyer to shove juries out of the way on the ground that he can do better. Perhaps he can. But so very much better? And can he give us any explanation of the dilemma of highly paid counsel? The advocate who earns £50,000 a year is either giving an unfair advantage to the client who can afford his fees, or else cheating him There may be an answer to this, but I have never yet heard it.

The English, taking solicitors as a whole, and considering them in their professional capacity, do not like them very much. When personal considerations are removed from their minds, they entertain an active dislike of all barristers. They have a faint hope of the judges, in spite of the fact that they were all barristers once After all, in the irrational English way, the judges are not appointed invariably because they were good barristers. The appointment of the late Lord Darling evoked a scream of rage from his own profession. But he made himself, in the eyes of the public, a very good judge. In one famous case he rescued prosecuting counsel from complete disaster by a few questions and led the way toward a perfectly just verdict which otherwise might not have been given. Prosecuting counsel in that case was the Attorney-General, who had already advanced much farther along the politico-legal way than Lord Darling ever did. He afterwards became a judge himself with a superior rank in the hierarchy But he never earned as much respect from the English public as the mediocre counsel, promoted to the bench of the High Court, who had got him out of his difficulty. In England we do not admire lawyers as much as they admire one another. With engineers it is a different matter. When the whole engineering profession combines to praise So-and-so's judgment in the matter of stresses, we take our hats off to him. But when all the Inns of Court combine to say of Such-and-such that he is a good lawyer, we pause and ask

ourselves what they are trying to put over on us now, or, to express it in a more decorous way, just what they mean by that. The only lawyers we are prepared really to like are those who, like Lord Darling, have shown themselves to be good judges, or, like the first Lord Birkenhead, have shown themselves to be good legislators and administrators. Such men make themselves felt as men capable of doing something that may affect us in a helpful, not a vexatious, way. But we think of them also as men who belong at least partly to the general body of humanity rather than, as lawyers so often do, overridingly to their profession.

Let me try to sum up in terms that shall be somewhat more intelligible than these confused pages. The law in England has got out of step with the spirit of the people. It has got too far out of step. The politicians also are out of step, but there are strings round their necks which occasionally remind them of it. They are working a vast and amorphous system of compromise and anachronisms which is the best the English people have been able to do in the way of political machinery. The machine may be, by absolute standards, a poorish thing, but so long as we can make adjustments here and there we succeed in keeping it at work. It is a long time since even the crassest of our politicians took a much higher view of it than that Politicians are sometimes apologetic about the tools they have to work with.

The lawyer is, however, often a very silly fel-

low who finds it hard to resist the temptation of cocking a snook at us. For centuries he has played the game both ways. In large numbers he has penetrated into the legislature and there he has taken a large part in passing the laws which afterwards, by their ambiguity, provide him with a proportionately large part of his living in the courts In doing this he has taken advantage of that amount of "play" which the English temperament loves to have in all its affairs. Our practical irrationality has been to him simply a prolific breeding-ground of precedents. Since we have always shown an overmastering desire to deal with every case on its merits, he has been able to find a precedent in every case and has cultivated a jungle of which he alone has a map. At the edge of the jungle, we say to him desperately: "You have all the facts. Shall I win my case?" "I don't know," he replies. "I must find out"— and he disappears among the lianas, cocking a snook at us as he goes. Generally he returns with a bill for counsel's opinion, which, as likely as not, will prove to be useless for some reason that simply did not occur to counsel. Even if it proves to be useful, the other, the beaten side, will pay only a part of the bill, and there is another lawyer, a Taxing Master, who has to be paid for saying how much ought to be paid.

Where the lawyer is so often a silly fellow is in not realizing that these things cause resentment. A little while ago I was discussing with some friends, in a purely abstract spirit, what should be

done in England by any would-be dictator who wanted to raise hatred against a particular section of the community. With little argument we dismissed the possibility of the Jews. "The Irish," said one of us, and that put a little fuel on the fire. But the fire was almost dying down again when another said in a voice of deep conviction: "For me, the lawyers!"

I believe that in this there is a hard core of sense. At the time, I was all for it. There was a barrister living just round the corner and there was a lamp post outside his house. The thing is not, I know, as simple as that. It would be of little use to hang lawyers one at a time, and my heart would probably fail me before we had got far with a proper *pogrom*. But the hard core of sense remains. The legal profession is unpopular whenever the easygoing English remember to think about it. It is unpopular because it has taken advantage of English easygoingness. We have made it a national habit to cross bridges one by one as we come to them instead of laying down general principles for the crossing of bridges. We suspect (or more than suspect) that the lawyers have laid down some general principles for the exploitation of this habit.

It may be objected that ill-natured jokes have been made against lawyers all over the world since there were any words in which to make them. That is true enough—but what it shows is that lawyers are the same all the world over. The essential point is how much opportunity is given

to them to make the ill-natured jokes true. It is perhaps true that every country has the lawyers it deserves. If it is, we may profitably remember that there are three countries in the world where the eminent advocate may hope to amass a large fortune. One of them is England. The others are the United States and India—in both of which the English tradition of law has had so deep an influence

This is, I think, one of the fields in which the English temperament works to the ill of its possessors, so that they need to be protected against themselves. What we need in England is fewer lawyers and more jurists. The jurists might do something to protect us against ourselves. They would also come much cheaper.

* * *

The preservation of order is a different question from that of the rule of law, in the widest sense of that phrase, and a much simpler one. Here our attachment to the principle of "play" has not led to so many evil consequences, but it does reveal itself in all sorts of extraordinary ways. The most suggestive instance that I can remember occurred while I was living in a village and was chatting one evening with the constable at my garden gate.

"There's old Bill Huggett," said the constable in a voice that was at once resigned and appreciative. "*That's* the way he's coming home tonight." And there, as I could see, was old Bill Huggett,

the shepherd, a squat and gnarled figure, black against the sunset, approaching his cottage from the back. The constable seemed to guess that I did not understand, for he went on: "He usually comes by the road." And, as I still looked puzzled, he added: "If I'd met him on the road, I'd have wanted to know something about that bulge in his pocket."

Here I asked for an explanation and got it. Bill Huggett had at least a rabbit, if not something better, in his pocket. He had made what was virtually a public confession of it when he approached his cottage by the field-path way, thus walking a mile or so more than he needed At the moment when the constable first saw him making this confession, there would still have been time to dash across and ask him about the bulge in his pocket. But Bill, who had poached the rabbit on his master's land, was still on his master's land, and therefore exempt from the constable's curiosity, unless his master had been there to authorize inquiries.

Bill pushed through a well-worn gap in the hedge at the bottom of his garden and disappeared into the cottage. "More likely it's a partridge," the constable murmured. "He's a wonderful hand at snaring the birds, Bill is."

Something resembling this can be found in the memoirs of that fine Englishman, Lord Brampton, much better known as Mr. Justice Hawkins. Hawkins, then a Bencher of the Middle Temple, lost a dog of which he was very fond, and was

indiscreet enough to offer a reward of fourteen pounds for its return. One day he received a call from "Sam Linton, the dog-finder," who thus addressed him:

> In orferin' fourteen pun, you've let the cat out o' the bag, and what I could ha' done had you consulted me sooner I can't do now, I could ha' got him for a fi'-pun note at one time, but they've worked on your feelin's, and, mark my words, they'll want twenty pun as the price o' that there dawg, as sure as my name's Sam Linton. That's all I got to say, Mr. Orkins, and I thought I'd come and warn yer like a man—he's got into bad hands, that there dawg.

Hawkins adds:

> Sam and I parted the best of friends, and, I need not say, on the best terms I could get I knew him for many years after this incident, and say to his credit that, although he was sometimes hard with customers, he acted, from all one ever heard, strictly in accordance with the bargain he made, whatever it might be; and what is more singular than all, I never heard of old Sam Linton getting into trouble.

It may be remarked that, only a very few years before this, the stealer would, at the valuation which the dog's owner set on him, have been liable to capital punishment But Hawkins enjoyed making a bargain with a person whom he describes as "one of the few genuinely honest men I have met" It is a display of that affection springing in the English heart for the licensed

wrong-doer—provided the wrong-doer knows where to draw the line.

Hawkins himself owed much of his fame to the part he played in exposing the Tichborne Claimant. Arthur Orton was a Wapping butcher who emigrated to Wagga Wagga in Australia and returned thence claiming to be Sir Roger Tichborne, who had been lost at sea eleven years before. The story has been often told and the details do not matter now. But it does matter that, preposterous as was what Arthur Orton had to say for himself, a large section of the English people took his side as a matter of public importance. To some this remains an inexplicable phenomenon. I think it is explained by the fact that we like a rogue, when he grins at us with sufficient assurance, when he is sufficiently audacious, and—when his success means nothing to most of us. There was one thing said about the claimant to the Tichborne lineage and acres which may be described as English illogicality on the highest level of poetic delirium—that "all the toffs were banded against him to do him out of his rights because he was only the son of a poor Wapping butcher."

Something very much like this was seen later in the career of a man as English as Hawkins or Orton. I mean Horatio Bottomley. Bottomley was, by all reasonable standards, a complete scoundrel. He floated dubious companies and enjoyed himself immensely on the money provided by the shareholders. He ran race-horses on that money and so acquired the reputation of a sportsman.

During the War he made a great deal of money by a nauseating parade of patriotism. At the end of the War he launched a scheme which was one-third patriotism, and one-third investment, and one-third gambling, and wholly a swindle and wholly disastrous for all those who took part in it. He had been for a long time advocating, as a means of raising money for national purposes, a sort of lottery loan with a periodical drawing and a premium for the lucky bondholders. The Treasury (which means the City of London) looked with an unfavorable eye on this proposal and was not likely ever to do otherwise. So Bottomley launched his own scheme. With subscriptions sent to him he was to purchase Victory Loan Bonds and to carry out his own drawings for the subscribers.

At that time the high wages of the War period had left some money behind, and many people thought that there must be some way for everyone to get rich as quickly as the War contractors had done. The unit of subscription was small and the response was terrific. It was urged on Bottomley's behalf that the response was enormously larger than he had made any provision for, and that in consequence the machinery of the scheme fell into utter confusion. There may be some element of truth in this, and it does seem that more money disappeared than Bottomley ever handled himself. There were uncrossed postal orders for small amounts about the cashing of which nothing could ever be proved. But huge sums were miss-

ing for which Bottomley was responsible, and there remained not the smallest doubt that he himself had put his hand into the till. This time he had spread his net too recklessly wide, and he fell. The man who for years had never been able to put on or take off his own boots without help, and who had always depended on a bottle of champagne at eleven in the morning to help him start the day, was sent to penal servitude for seven years. And when he came out, few of his old supporters were ready to help him.[1] He had cast his net too wide.

If Bill Huggett, instead of lifting an occasional rabbit or partridge from his master's land, had taken his neighbors' chickens or the vegetables out of their gardens, my friend, the village constable, would soon have found a way of putting him under lock and key. Or if Bill had raided his master's game on a large scale and caused it obviously to diminish in numbers, then his master would have invoked all the powers of the law against him and his ultimate fate would have been worse. That is what has happened to Clarence Hatry, and two or three others of the same sort, within immediate recollection.

What is odd is that Bottomley *was* a patriot. He *was* also a sportsman, who must have lost more

[1] There were some I once saw him, in his post-prison days, entertaining three friends at luncheon in a well-known London restaurant Three bottles of champagne came to the table and went away empty, and Bottomley signed the bill My companion, a respectable solicitor, said wistfully "It *must* be fun to be an undischarged bankrupt."

money in racing than he ever gained. He *was* also a sturdy Radical of the type of William Cobbett and Charles Bradlaugh, and did good work for certain causes of which they would both have approved. (A chance facial resemblance started the legend that he was Bradlaugh's son, a legend he was not overanxious to discourage.) But to Bottomley, his patriotism, his sportsmanship, and his radicalism were, when he discovered them in himself, assets to be exploited. He was Bill Huggett gone wrong. Bill Huggett used his English gift of cunning with discretion Bottomley was a hedge-side plant moved into a soil where it grew rank and became easily recognizable as a noxious weed.

Horatio Bottomley and the great Tichborne Claimant are huge growths straddling the region between the line where the law-breaking that the English *may* stand leaves off, and the line where begins the law-breaking that they will *not* stand. Between these lies the region in which "play" occurs It is a populous region. All street betting is carried on within it, and a good deal of illegal drinking. But the lines are vaguely and tortuously drawn.

I should waste time were I to attempt to elucidate our betting laws here. The best I can do is to give a sort of concentrated specimen. I may use my telephone to say to my bookmaker that I want £5 on Saucy Girl in the 2·30 at the starting price. But if I meet the emissary of a humbler sort of bookmaker, if I meet a runner, in the saloon

bar of the pub round the corner, and give him a slip expressing the same hope of Saucy Girl, and half a crown in cash with it, then we are all likely to be in trouble—not least the landlord of the pub, who may have had no opportunity of preventing us from carrying out our lawless transaction. Ready-money betting (except, by an ultimate fatuity, on race-courses) is an offense laying one open to severe penalties. Yet it is an offense which is committed some hundreds of thousands of times a day. Were I Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, with as many men as I wanted for the purpose, with sufficient disciplinary powers over them, and with a certainty that the courts would award the necessary punishments, I would undertake to stamp out street betting in London in a much shorter time than six months. Any dictator who thought it desirable, or safe, could do it without exerting himself. But we, collectively, prefer to leave it as one of the activities of the Debatable Ground.

It is the same with that equally horrible vice of drinking alcoholic liquor. Again, I shall attempt no exhaustive treatise. But why should it be possible to have a drink at any hour of the day or night on any train on which there are facilities for serving a drink? If I am stationary in Piccadilly Circus at 3:05 P.M., I may not order a glass of beer. If, however, I am being carried along the railway tracks toward Manchester, I can order glass after glass, if there is any beer on the train and someone to serve it. And even so,

the position is doubtful. It was once decided that drinks could not be served on a steamboat on the Severn during hours which were forbidden on land. May Heaven guard me against the desire to investigate all such manifestations of the English mind! There are too many of them. I mention these because here we have another instance of what seems to be a national tendency to push certain problems into the Debatable Ground.

There are, that is to say, certain things which we cannot bring ourselves either to countenance or to forbid. So, instead of prohibition, we impose incomprehensible difficulties. The whole thing is a nightmare unless we can grasp the English idea of a borderland between law-abidingness and criminality. In this strange area, actions which no reasonable man would consider criminal may be visited with a penalty, and others which seem obviously deserving of punishment may go scot-free. I am inclined to a fantastic hypothesis which I put forward for what it may seem to be worth.

The idea of a borderland is in the English blood. There was a time when some of our ancestors were advancing over the land from the east, while others were retreating into the west but defending themselves as they went. Between them lay the Debatable Ground, a belt which shifted, but which always kept this characteristic, that both sides thought of it as their own and not their own. And this shifting belt acted as a buffer which softened the contact between the newcomer

and those in possession and made it possible for them to coalesce at last. In the English character which arose out of the union there have been always two strains, one adventurous, the other stolidly law-abiding and conventional. The existence of the Debatable Ground eases the tension between the two. The question is whether sometimes it does not breed more illogicalities and uncertainties than the easing is worth. It is beyond question that it has always been a lucrative Tom Tiddler's Ground for the lawyers. It is a very English institution, but, whatever it may have done for us in the past, it does us little good now and a great deal of harm

* * *

The Debatable Ground is no less discernible in the spheres of religion and morality than in those of law and order. It is a remarkable, and perhaps cardinal, fact that we have never taken kindly to religious persecution as it has been practised elsewhere. Except for brief periods, we have always been unwilling to forbid men to worship as they pleased. The persecution of the Lollards brought about a state of affairs in which responsible authorities of the Church complained that no priest could hope for fair treatment at the hands of a London jury. The memory of the Marian burnings enabled Elizabeth and her advisers to establish the singular Anglican system. The same memory in the long run helped to throw James II from his throne. Cromwell was

himself a tolerant man, but the intolerance of some of his Puritan associates had much to do with the joy with which England greeted the Restoration.

We have nearly always definitely drawn the line at telling a man that we would kill him if he persisted in practising a religion that was not our own. But until almost within living memory we have thought it quite proper to make him as uncomfortable as possible if he persists. Putting the stake on one side with a virtuous gesture, we devised instead an elaborate system of disabilities for all Dissenters from the Church of England—including Roman Catholics. One example will serve—about the mildest and, I think, the latest of any importance to survive. Until 1858, a Dissenter could not take a degree at either of the older English universities. This, incidentally, was the reason for the foundation of the University of London and the beginning of the modern university movement.

The Church of England, in whose name these things were done, is, impartially considered, the most startling birth of the English mind. There is nothing like it anywhere in the world—though there may be something as strange in other ways if Herr Hitler succeeds in establishing a totalitarian German Christianity. I use the word "startling," I beg my readers to believe, in no disrespectful, not even in an ironical, sense. It is in a literal sense that the epithet is justified. It could be justified, if in no other way, by the existence

of the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible and by the Book of Common Prayer. These are two of the most splendid works of literature in our language, and how they came into existence is more than anyone is able to explain The first, with all its poetical magnificence, with the sweep and fury and the simplicity and the sweetness of its prose (each of these qualities in its proper place) was produced by a committee of bishops and other learned divines in an unbelievably short space of time "The worke," said one of the translators, "hath . . . cost the workmen, light as it seemeth, the price of twice seven times seventie and two days and more. . . . To that purpose there were many chosen, that were greater in other men's eyes than in their owne, and that sought the truth rather than their own praise." As light as it seemeth! This glorious work of prose was produced in something under three years.[1] It was done very largely by men who had attained to eminence in the Church by reason of the adroitness with which they could accommodate themselves to the intricate ecclesiastical politics of those times.

The Book of Common Prayer was, to a great extent, the work of the arch-trimmer, Cranmer, who trimmed so often and with so much ability that in the end he was too tired to double again

[1] Admittedly it was in form a revision and standardization of earlier versions But it has the ring and stamp of an authentic new creation. The Revised Version of the nineteenth century was set on foot in 1870 and was completed, by the publication of the Apocrypha, in 1895.

and fate got him in its jaws. The beauty of the Prayer Book is dulled even more than that of the Bible by unthinking repetition, especially by the habit, now fortunately dying out, of making children learn Collects by heart on Sunday afternoons. But a small effort of the mind removes the dulness, and who can then fail to be moved by the heartrending beauty of the Marriage Service and the Service for the Burial of the Dead? Who can fail to see that these and the Collects and the various prayers for special occasions make a sequence of poems which even Shakespeare's Sonnets cannot surpass?

Take, for instance, this:

> Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching thee, that it may please thee, of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I should not like it to be thought that I am here putting forward the view which can be roughly summarized thus: "Of course we are not religious, you and I, and, if we were, we should

not belong to that humdrum institution, the Church of England. But we are broad-minded and we can enjoy good prose when we see it. Let us forget the religious origin of the Authorized Version and the Book of Common Prayer and simply appreciate them as literature." I do not forget the religious origin of these works nor do I wish to forget it Without it, I should be totally at a loss to account for their production by the men who did produce them. It is true that they lived in an age when almost any Englishman seemed to be able to write good prose as easily as he breathed. But that does not explain their having written so much prose that was so superbly good. And I reject the vision of Lancelot Andrewes summoning his collaborators in the Authorized Version with the words: "Come on, boys—here's a chance to show what we can do as stylists!" The Bible and the Prayer Book are fine literature but they have a greater value, even for those without the religious disposition, than they can have in that category. They testify beyond dispute to the existence of the religious disposition in their authors.

The Church of England was not the creation of trimmers and time-servers and place-seekers. It was the work of sincere men whose sincerity is displayed in the force of their writing. With all its compromises it was a genuine expression of the English spirit in the sphere of religion Not least, indeed, in its compromises, which mark out the vague boundaries of the Debatable Ground.

I find it hard to believe that the adroit men who drew up the Thirty-nine Articles did not foresee their consequences, if not with their intellects, still with their deepest instincts. They foresaw that there would be some people who would interpret the Articles this way, and some who would interpret them that, and others again who would pay as much attention to them as small boys do to the by-laws posted up on notice boards in public parks. They foresaw, in fact, that what they had founded would somehow hang together in defiance of all probabilities.

Since their time the Church has gone through a variety of vicissitudes. It has much to show for itself. It has the sermons and the religious poems of that self-confessed young rakehell, John Donne. An Anglican Dean of St. Paul's, a man with a past much open to criticism, wrote:

Batter my heart, three-person'd God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
Labor to admit you, but O, to no end.
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

The same man wrote also, in earlier years: "For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love"—as rough an admonition as any ever addressed by poet to his mistress. The same man also had his picture painted in his shroud to make him mindful of the eternity that awaited him. I cannot believe that John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, conceived of the Church of England merely as an ingenious and convenient system of checks and balances to enable the political system to go on.

The Church of England produced also the exquisite and mollifying piety of George Herbert. It produced Herrick, who wrote, in the *Hesperides:*

> I long to kiss my Julia's dainty leg:
> It is as white and hairless as an egg,

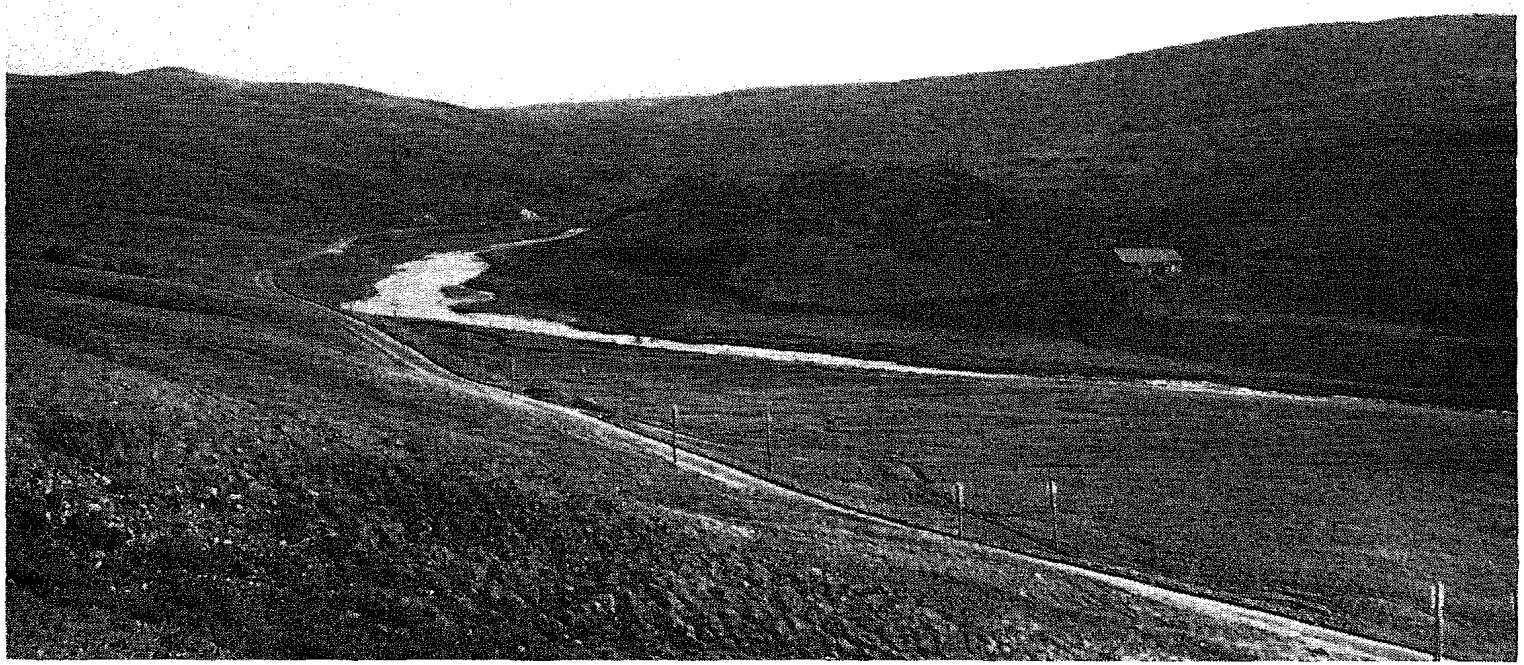
and in *Noble Numbers:*

> Here, a little child, I stand,
> Heaving up my either hand:
> Cold as paddocks though they be,
> Yet I heave them up to Thee.

("Paddocks," by the way, means frogs.) I have a nearly contemporary portrait of Herrick, which shows him with a conquering nose and bold, sensual lips. One wonders, looking at it, why such a man should have been content to stay in a Devonshire parsonage. The first of my quotations suggests a reason for Herrick's unwillingness to move, until, as happened under the Commonwealth, he was kicked out. The second quotation

ROBERT HERRICK

"His pet was a pig of which he was very fond and which he taught



Courtesy L. M. S. Railway.

THE BORDER

"The idea of a borderland is in the English blood."

suggests as strongly that, whatever his weaknesses as a man, he must have been an admirable country parson. In that one touch of the cold hands he reveals an instinctive dynamic sympathy with all living things, from which the human beings in his parish must have benefited as much as the flowers and the smaller animals. He had seen small boys of eight and nine out in the fields, justifying their existence by scaring crows through bitter winter days. His pet, we are told, was a pig of which he was very fond and which he taught to drink out of a tankard. When the Commonwealth had dissolved into nothing, he returned to his parish, and I should think that the parishioners, human, animal and vegetable, were glad to see him back.

It would be very hard, I think, to find a common denominator for John Donne, George Herbert and Robert Herrick, except in the fact that they were all priests of the English Church. But they *were* all priests of the English Church. Somehow or other they managed to fit themselves into its framework.

Later on, the Church was to accommodate other characters of other sorts. Frederick Augustus Hervey was appointed to a bishopric in Ireland at the age of thirty-seven. He was the Earl of Bristol after whom so many hotels on the Continent are named. Apart from a brief and frenzied participation in the Irish volunteer movement in the seventeen-eighties, he spent most of

his long life in moving from place to place over the face of Europe in a manner which commanded the respect of inn-keepers everywhere. I have stayed in one or two Hotels Bristol. Of the worst of them it can be said that they did more for their patrons than their tutelary genius ever did for the flock entrusted to his pastoral care

About this time the Church of England had fallen into a state from which one might well have supposed that it would never recover. In many parishes the rector or the vicar had become a humble dependant of the local magnate and was often picked as a suitable husband for the housekeeper or the lady's maid, when the time came for either of them to retire. Simultaneously, the Church's great plums (and it still had many) went to members of the privileged classes—as, for example, Frederick Augustus Hervey, who did not much apply himself to a bishop's work. It did seem as though the Church were going to be divided into comfortable great lords and mere menials. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Church slowly climbed out of that trough. But it never quite got out of it. Even when Trollope wrote, one of the first things that struck him was the contrast between the poor parson and the rich Eventually, in *The Last Chronicle of Barset,* Trollope brought it to a head with Mr. Crawley, the perpetual curate of Hogglestock:

. . . An unhappy, moody, disappointed man, upon whom the troubles of the world always seemed to come with double weight. But he had ever been respected as a clergyman, since his old friend Mr. Arabin, the Dean of Barchester, had given him the small incumbency which he now held. Though moody, unhappy and disappointed, he was a hard-working, conscientious pastor among the poor people with whom his lot was cast, for in the parish of Hogglestock there resided only a few farmers higher in degree than field laborers, brickmakers and such like. Mr. Crawley had now passed some ten years of his life at Hogglestock, and during those years he had worked very hard to do his duty, struggling to teach the people around him perhaps too much of the mystery, but something also of the comfort of religion. That he had become popular in his parish cannot be said of him. He was not a man to make himself popular in any position. . . . Among the very poor, among the brick-makers of Hoggle End—a lawless, drunken, terribly rough lot of humanity—he was held in high respect, for they knew that he lived hardly, as they lived, that he worked hard, as they worked; and that the outside world was hard to him, as it was to them; and there had been an apparent sincerity of godliness about the man, and a manifest struggle to do his duty in spite of the world's ill-usage, which had won its way even with the rough; so that Mr. Crawley's name had stood high with many in his parish, in spite of the unfortunate peculiarity of his disposition. This was the man who was now accused of stealing a check for twenty pounds.

Trollope, with devastating fairness, puts Mr. Crawley beside Archdeacon Grantly, with his archidiaconal income, besides his ample private means, and a number of other clergymen who have obtained reasonably remunerative ecclesiastical appointments of one kind or another Mr Crawley had a daughter, named Grace, who behaved with more discretion than the daughter of the Vicar of Wakefield. But the problem was the same, and it has gone on being the same ever since.

During the nineteenth century the lower ranks of the clergy climbed up slowly from the pit into which the eighteenth century had pushed them. At the same time the Church of England found room for such diverse characters as Charles Kingsley and Archdeacon Manning, later to be known, in another communion, as Cardinal Manning. It must have been this period that Mr. Shane Leslie meant when he said that the function of the Church of England was to establish a resident gentleman in every parish. During the second half of the last century and later, the parish priest was the social equal of anyone in the world, and *ex hypothesi,* sent his sons to the best schools. (His daughters often did not come off as well) While all this was happening, the dissenting elements in the country (apart from the Roman Catholics) were coming closer and closer to the practices of the Establishment. When I was a boy the Book of Common Prayer was in use in most Nonconformist congregations, with only an extempore prayer thrown in as a gesture of independence.

We feel ourselves superior to the Greeks of the Byzantine period who committed murder over an odd syllable in the description of God. To me that sometimes seems nobler than the behavior of our sects, which alternately smirk and scowl at one another over nothing at all that any one of them appears to value.

But there came the great change in the value of money which was caused by the War, and the Church ran into trouble again. The parson's pay became, in purchasing power, very much less than it had been. The demands of his comparatively recently acquired social position did not diminish, nor did the demands of his children for the pleasures which had quite recently been revealed to them. We began to hear not only now and again of unfortunate cases, like that of the "perpetual curate of Hogglestock" who was innocently in trouble over a check, but again and again of men in charge of parishes who could not pay their rates, who could not pay their butchers' bills, and who were obliged to appear in court and explain as best they could why they were unable to pay. They had to make their admissions in face of a world which had been trained to regard them as gentlemen—that is, as people who either were solvent or were not, and who could not admit to being betwixt and between, or, at least, could not ever admit it in public. The trouble was intensified by the payers of tithe (roughly speaking, the parson's salary) who wanted to know why they *should* pay tithe and, in many instances, refused

to do it, and were not easy to compel. The clergy have, most of them, accepted their positions on the promise of salaries which some of them are not always able to draw. Tithe is a difficult question, and it has not been made easier by the legislative efforts of persons who seem to have had their minds elsewhere when they were making their assumptions and framing their clauses And all this happens at a time when, by general admission of the ministers of religion themselves, we are growing from day to day less religious.

In this crisis the churches are frequently pathetic. "Come in," they say, "come in." Because of a misunderstood text in St. Paul, they used to take a dignified attitude toward any woman tourist who wanted to look at the inside of a cathedral, but who was not wearing a hat. Now they say to the girl hiker, "Only come in. Don't bother about your uncovered hair. Don't bother about your bare knees We'll even change the times of our services so as not to interfere with your Sunday hike. But do come in!"

This might be interpreted as being strictly in accord with the spirit of primitive Christianity —but I suspect that the interpretation would be wrong. It shows modern organized religion at a low ebb in which it is driven to appeals of a humiliating nature. What is most humiliating about them is that they are put forward under the guise of "concessions to the modern spirit." Organized religion can on occasion admit that it has been wrong, but it can never safely "make con-

cessions" Such matters are governed by certain standards, whether immutable or merely temporary. If they are really immutable, the churches ought to make a stand on them and, if necessary, die to the last man in their defense. If they are temporary, the churches ought to know the moment at which explicitly to throw them overboard. What religion can never afford is a delaying rearguard action. This uses up resources which cannot be replaced. The Church of England is, in a rather confused and half-hearted way, engaged in such an action now—and in this I associate with it the so-called Free Churches, which, in everything that matters, are separated from it only by memories of a vanished social barrier.

But when we consider how the Church came into existence, and what difficulties it has surmounted, what it has done, what men it has fostered—John Donne, Robert Herrick, George Herbert and the perpetual curate of Hogglestock —it is hard to believe that it will not find a way out of its present troubles. So much resilience and energy cannot be soon exhausted.

* * *

The morality of England is a thing which has grown up under the influence of the churches and yet somehow keeps an independent existence. There have been, it must be said, other factors in its growth What is called Nonconformist morality (which other nations often take to be characteristic of us) seems at first sight to have little

connection with the teachings of Christianity—not because it inculcates different virtues, but because of its distribution of emphasis. It emphasizes chiefly those virtues which will lead to a decent prosperity in the world—temperance, because a thick head in the morning is bad for business, chastity, because complications with women are bad for business, strict payment of just debts, because long and doubtful credit is bad for business.

It cannot be doubted that, ever since the seventeenth century, Nonconformist morality has tended to flow in these channels—and has, incidentally, placed a correspondingly lighter emphasis on the virtue of charity. Mr. Jack Lindsay, in a very interesting study, has recently shown how the longer he lived the more did John Bunyan instinctively put forward wealth as the result of virtue, and poverty as the result of vice. (He shows also that Bunyan's own wealth progressively increased, though, to be sure, it was never much.)

But it would be a mistake to regard the Nonconformist morality as a convenient cover for acquisitive instincts. It began as the flame-pure application of certain principles. These were almost wholly negative. The man who found religion was required, before all else, to stop doing certain things which he had been in the habit of doing before. And these things *were* bad for business. More—the man who stopped doing them found the time which hitherto they had taken up hanging heavy on his hands, and the most

obvious use he could make of it was to do more business. In consequence, the converted sinner visibly flourished, and it was not far from the observation of that fact to the belief that his prosperity was the measure of the efficacy of his conversion. The process was quite natural, however objectionable some of its results may have been.

Nor can it be said that all its results were purely objectionable. A numerous section of the community began in the seventeenth century to discipline itself to habits of thrift and hard work. One might almost suppose that some celestial voice had whispered in its ear that the Industrial Revolution was only just below the horizon and that soon these habits and the capital accumulated with their help would be much in demand. Assuredly, if the Nonconformists, with their habits and their savings, had not been at hand when machinery began to play an important part in our economy, the Industrial Revolution and the whole of our history from then on would have taken a different, an unimaginable, course. They provided a powerful middle class when it was most needed and for that we must forgive them much.

Today the morality of the Nonconformists is as much weakened as the difference between them and the Church of England. When I was young, the list of prohibitions was still long and formidable, and serious attempts were made to enforce it One of my friends in the years immediately preceding the War was a young woman in her twenties who was not allowed to enter a theater.

When she wished to accompany the rest of us to the play the most elaborate arrangements had to be made for the deception of her parents One of these plays, I remember, was Stanley Houghton's *The Younger Generation,* describing a revolt in just such a strictly governed family as hers. At that time I was engaged to the daughter of a Nonconformist family, who was a singer. Before she was allowed to begin her musical career, she was required to give a solemn promise that she would never become an actress. There was a minor earthquake when it was discovered that she was putting a little rouge on her cheeks for the purposes of the platform. It was an earthquake of more than minor proportions when her master advised her to gargle with a little port before singing in public. That stupendous row ended in the oddest of compromises, under which she gave a solemn promise never to let alcoholic liquor touch her lips except in my presence.

These things were realities then—they were the morality according to which many of us lived. But they are shadows today. *That* morality is breaking up like a sheet of ice, and the fragments are melting. It was not a morality I ever loved or one under which I ever consented to live. But it *was* a way of life and it was very English, springing, as I have suggested, out of the English sense of religion, however much the original impulses may have been transformed.

Nothing that it is possible to see is taking its

place. We do not yet divorce and remarry with the freedom that is used in America. I do not number among my acquaintances, I think, any man or woman who has had more than three spouses. But there are a good many who have had two, and, looking round my circle, I make bold to say that there will be more. Time was when a young man might grow up and marry without ever having met anyone whose marriage had been dissolved. Today, at least in the upper and middle classes, that is virtually impossible.

This matter of divorce is of capital importance, since here the churches have fought a delaying action, typical of, but more spectacular than, what is going on along the whole line. I say, "the churches," but for a long time it was only the Roman Catholic Church that honestly gave battle to what are considered to be the forces of disruption. It was in an inexpugnable position, being able to control admission to, and expulsion from, its own communion in accordance with its own laws. The Protestant dissenting sects, which we call Nonconformity or the Free Churches, took little interest, since these questions did not arise among their members. The Church of England meekly discharged the obligations which Parliament had laid upon it. Not until within living memory did priests of the Church of England, as by law established, begin, with the approval and the incitement and, finally, the positive admonition of their Bishops, that course of flat defiance of the law to which I have referred on an

earlier page.[1] When they did, most of what was left of the Nonconformist morality wheeled into place to support them

The effect of this delaying action seems to me to have been almost wholly disastrous. I am old-fashioned enough to believe in the institution of marriage. I think, that is to say, that when a man and a woman decide to live together, and perhaps to rear children, they ought to make a public declaration of the fact, so that we may all know where we are with them, and also that responsibility may be fixed. This should be a bond not to be loosed save under certain generally agreed and understood rules. What is called an "irregular union" is usually a nuisance to society. So far from giving freedom to the parties, it places on them the fetters of the indefinite. Never having been married, they cannot be divorced. If they should wish to terminate their relationship, there are no prescribed forms for them to follow. Their separation leaves behind it a mess which is never quite cleared up, and may at any time get under the feet of other persons.

In this sphere the English love of compromise has sunk almost to its lowest depths. Mr. A P. Herbert's Matrimonial Causes Act, with its bar on divorce during the first three years of marriage, has, I believe, struck the hardest blow at the institution of marriage that has been dealt since the principle of divorce (as apart from nullity) was admitted. Mr. Herbert admittedly adopted

[1] Page 126.

this clause to aid the passage of others which he rightly regarded as of great importance. He would not, I am sure, have touched it had he not wished to have some bribe to offer to the churches.

The result will be that young people will be increasingly disinclined to marry. The age when the blood is hot is also an age when three years seems a very long time. Medical science has made "irregular unions" or "free alliances" (or, if you prefer it, "companionate marriages") extremely non-committal. The best that can be hoped for is that the young people, avoiding both the altar and the registrar's table, will go to their solicitors for articles of partnership properly drawn up and providing for every contingency.

To this point we have been brought by the loosening of the code which, though we call it Nonconformist morality, was really a secretion of the English mind in general. The loosening has made this a pleasanter, sweeter country to live in. Were that early love of mine twenty years old again today, she would not have to fear the moral thunders of her parents because she made herself even more charming by spreading a little rouge on her cheeks. She would use a lipstick—which in those days she never did, because she herself (and I also) would have considered it bad form. And if we were on holiday together, with our respective families, she would wear garments which would make much less of a mystery of her. They say that the removal of these mysteries is, from the purely sensual and esthetic point of view, a bad

thing. I believe, on the contrary, that it has made this a pleasanter and a sweeter land. But where is the replacement of our old Nonconformist morality which made earlier generations work so hard, which made them keep their eyes on the schoolbook and the ledger? Perhaps the modern attachment to physical fitness will fill the gap. It has in it at least the makings of a morality—though not of one like any our Western civilization has so far known. But this development, if it occurs, is one that we shall share with much of the rest of the world. We are left to wonder whether there is anything specially English that the English can put into it.

VI

Private Lives

THE things which have been described in the last two chapters constitute the framework within which the Englishman moves all his days. But few of them, except religion (and that, it must be owned, less and less), touch him often in his daily life. For long stretches of time he does not think about them at all. Some of them are things about which he prefers not to think. He does his best to keep out of the hands of the lawyers. Even bringing or defending an action in the civil courts is, he thinks, a thing that happens to other people, not to oneself—still more, standing in the dock on a criminal charge. He secretly hopes to avoid jury service all his life and sometimes, by some inexplicable freak in the system, he does He has all sorts of queer dodges to this end which sometimes he will slyly impart. My father told me of a sovereign safeguard. As soon as I set up as a householder, and again whenever I moved into a new district, I was to allow myself to be summoned for failure to pay my rates. (It does not work) Another friend of mine, who has been a householder for about thirty years, has never sat on a jury, and solemnly attributes his immunity to the fact that when he was a young man

he was fined five shillings for riding a bicycle after dark without a lamp.

I mention these things to show that the Englishman does not want to be troubled about the framework of his life more than is absolutely necessary There are unhappy signs that this disinclination is spreading into the field of politics. Nowadays, it seems, he must be frightened of something before he will be at the pains of going to the polling booths in large numbers This tendency is naturally less noticeable in national than in municipal politics. But in municipal politics it is very noticeable indeed. There you cannot do much with the English voter even by the most valiant attempts to make his flesh creep. Nothing can be more certain than that a majority of the municipal voters of London look on Socialism with distrust or even aversion. But fewer than half of them go to the polls, and a Socialist majority can be elected to the London County Council by under a quarter of London's inhabitants. The remainder content themselves with an occasional, usually misinformed grumble about the rates or the efficiency of the street-cleaning services.

It must be owned that the level of administration has risen since the days of Dogberry, Bumble, and the Tite Barnacles. The Englishman has not really a great deal of which he can complain. This is not enough, indeed, to prevent him from complaining, but it is enough to prevent him from doing much more. In his dealings with authority, he takes, as he himself would say, the rough

with the smooth. He dances with rage when he is summoned for some motoring offense which either (he swears) he has not committed or else ought never to be an offense at all. But when he has finished dancing, more often than not he sits down and writes a letter of apology to the court, asking how he shall fill in the check which he is quite prepared to send.

Sometimes he suffers from administrative injustice in a way which does seriously affect his convenience, his pocket, or his honor. There is no sadder sight than an Englishman in this position. He looks as though the sky has fallen on him. He wants to call for the police, but if, as may be the case, it is the police who have aggrieved him, what is he to do? He appeals to all the world for sympathy and help, but, while his friends may give him sympathy, they do not know how to help him, and the rest are disinclined to give him either. This is the kind of thing which happens to other people, not to oneself. Oscar Slater and Adolf Beck served weary years in prison because of failures in the administrative machine—but you and I, of course, run no such risk.[1] This kind of accident can never affect *our* private lives.

* * *

[1] The hardships of the divorce law provide here an interesting parallel. I once discussed the difficulties of reform with one of its most eminent and pertinacious advocates. He said "Until people are in the shadow of the Divorce Court, they do not believe that they ever will be. When they come out of it, they want never to think of it again" He was right. I was quite honest in all the promises of help I gave him. But as soon as I had emerged from that depressing shadow I found other things to think of

We English are sometimes given to talking as though no other race had any private lives at all comparable with ours. It is not so long since moralists used smugly to announce that the French (more to be pitied than to be blamed) had no word in their language for "home." *La maison,* in its proper context, is as good a word and *chez soi* seems to me to have even cosier and more private overtones. The French, indeed, have private lives which, for sheer fierceness of privacy, drive ours out of sight. It may be added that the Frenchman, who goes home for luncheon far more generally than we do, makes thus a use of his home which ought to compensate for his deplorable habit of dining, with the whole of his family, in public restaurants.

The matter of Income Tax is relevant here. There is nothing the normal Englishman feels as more distasteful than the necessity of discussing his financial business with an outsider. Ask him what his income is or whence it comes and he will retire within his shell, muttering resentfully as he goes, "That's my business!" But this impost, which involves complete disclosure to the official eye, has been, with two short intervals, an essential part of our economy for nearly a century and a half. It is true that we are allowed to make our own returns, but the authorities are allowed to make their own assessments and to challenge us to disprove them by the production of our accounts. This power is, in practice, sagely and moderately used, but it exists as a frightful threat

to the privacy which the Englishman so much values. The taxpayer comforts himself by reflecting that, however distasteful the possibility of this inquisition may be, the tax is one with a just and common-sense basis.

The Frenchman, living in the home of centralized government and the importance of officials, managed to protect himself against Income Tax for more than a century longer than his neighbor. The heart and soul of this resistance was perhaps the dour Gallic determination (bred by countless generations of feudal overlords) not to pay more in taxes than is absolutely necessary. But the battle-cry of the opponents of Income Tax was that it meant an invasion of privacy. This gave the resistance a respectable, even an honorable, appearance. It did not, in the long run, prevent the imposition of the tax, but to this day it prevents the yield from being what it should be.[1] The Frenchman has defended his privacy

[1] I suspect also an instinctive revulsion from the modern practice in taxation of locating somewhere a sum of money and taking part of it away in the form of money—so many book-keeping entries The hard-headed materialist French like one side of these equations to be expressed in terms of goods, since thus we are kept in touch with realities This would account for their attachment to the system of indirect taxation—even to what seems to us the paralyzing system of the *octroi* A farm woman paying a few centimes each on every pair of chickens she takes within town limits, is a string tethering taxation to the ground and preventing it from a swoop into the delirious empyrean of the higher finance It is no part of my business to comment on the national character of the French But I may be permitted to observe, aside and in a whisper, that England is the native home of the higher finance and that the English are a race of poets and that money is only a metaphor No coin ever minted, or note ever printed, was ever necessarily a pair of chickens, except, so to speak, in a manner of speaking

better than we ours. His tax collectors are reduced to peeping through a keyhole, whereas ours can walk boldly into the house—upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber. This last phrase is almost literally correct. One business man of my acquaintance, making a claim for expenses, averred (truthfully, I am sure) that his business interests demanded that his wife should be well dressed. Thereupon he and the Inspector of Taxes, with whom he was discussing the matter, went into conference on the subject of the cost of women's clothes and found that they had so many grievances in common that it was easy for them to come to an amicable understanding on the matter.

* * *

But we have private lives of our own which are, in their way, or have been, richer than those of any other race Their great danger is that our delight in them has led to the atrophy of our public lives, to an abandonment of the vigilance by which alone a healthy communal life is maintained. The process seems to have gone even further in America and for much the same reasons.

These reasons have played a great part in forming our national temperament. We have a propitious soil and climate, and—a fact which I have mentioned before, but which cannot be mentioned too often or too emphatically—to an extraordinary degree we have been spared the devastation of war. It was English armies that marched to and fro over France, not French armies over England.

Armies of all sorts marched to and fro over Germany and Italy. Spain was engaged in the frightful struggle with the Moors when England was "merrie England." The Turks plundered and slaughtered as far as Vienna. Napoleon conducted his campaigns from one end of Europe to the other, but not on this side of the Channel. We did not even send many of our sons to the wars They stayed at home, and, by comparison, lived on the fat of a land which all the world regarded as being enviably fat.

I do not suggest (Heaven forbid that I should) that the population of England has always lived, or lives now, in an earthly paradise. I am speaking in comparatives. According to the best medical opinion, close on half of it even now has a diet poorer than would be prescribed by the best medical opinion. But for this there are reasons contributory to the main reason of poverty, and there have been times when our national economy has been better adjusted. It was in these times that our attachment to our private lives threw down its strong roots.

Let me take first this question of food. No one, I suppose, will deny that in the growing of foodstuffs and in the variety and quality of those she grows, England has few rivals anywhere on the face of the earth. As I have said in an earlier chapter, it takes some doing, but the results are worth it. On tropical islands (or so I am told) the ripe breadfruit falls beside the drowsy native without any effort on his part. But I have yet

to meet any of my fellow countrymen who would accept an eternal diet of effortless breadfruit as a compensation for eternally renouncing roast beef, roast potatoes, brussels sprouts and horse-radish sauce.

Before I have finished I shall probably have something more to say, in a different context, about the view which the Englishman takes of the food of other countries. He often utters a great deal on this subject that, in his heart, he does not mean. In his heart he still sings: "Oh, the roast beef of old England, and England's roast beef!" When he extols the food he has met with abroad, what really moves him is the conviction that French, German, and Italian (yes, and Spanish) cooks take more trouble over their dishes than do our own. Not long ago I overheard a man at a neighboring table in a restaurant discoursing on this theme. He looked as though he liked food and ought to know the difference between good and bad. He said, beating on the table with his fist: "You *cannot* go into any restaurant in France, however small, without getting a better meal than you do here." It is, of course, simply not true. I have had meals put before me in the south of France that would make even London's champion appetite-destroyer think himself a mere beginner.

But there is enough truth in the statement to make it worth our while to investigate the reason for there being any at all. I believe that the reason is quite simple The same cause has made our cooks careless in the handling of materials that

has made continental cooks elaborately careful in the handling of theirs. It is that materials differ according to the soil on which they are grown. I maintain that what we call "continental cookery" evolved all its elaborate apparatus of sauces and flavorings because in the first instance it was confronted with the problem of poor and tasteless meat.

It is not always realized what progress the world has made in this matter of food. We read about "Lucullan banquets" and the orgies of Nero, but I feel a strong suspicion that if I were to sit down to table with Lucullus or Nero I should be offered something much less palatable than I could get today in a second-rate Italian restaurant in Soho. Unquestionably the cookery of the Middle Ages all over Europe would fill most of us with disgust. These things are not matters of changing taste. The spices and sweetenings with which every dish at Richard II's coronation banquet was loaded and contaminated were there to counteract the flavorlessness (or perhaps, in some instances, to disguise the flavor) of the basic materials. The passionate interest shown by the Middle Ages in spices, and especially in pepper, throws a revealing light on the medieval table—even though it were the King's own. These things had to be brought at enormous risk and expense, from the countries where they were grown, to make food palatable. I confess that even today I should not willingly face the prospect of a world without pepper—to say nothing of curry powder. (How

the Middle Ages would have loved curry powder, with which you can mask the flavor of almost anything![1]) But it is now possible to prepare palatable meals all the year round without using a single ingredient that comes from outside England.

The contemporaries of Richard II did not understand the art of growing food as it has been developed during the last few centuries. And naturally this art was developed first in England, where the soil is good for pastures and for grain, for kitchen gardens and for orchards. Gradually the English cook found at her door the best materials that any cook could desire. While her colleagues abroad were desperately devising sauces with a dozen ingredients each, her only necessities were simplicity and care. But in this there lay the seeds of disaster. It is a common error, among those who do not think very much, to go on the theory that simplicity is best achieved by not taking care. Unfortunately too many English cooks did not think, and simplicity became slovenliness. Later, ill-directed attempts were made to remedy this state of affairs by introducing complications from the Continent and grafting them on to genuine English cookery, where they have never taken a useful root.

The essence of English cookery is simplicity—in a single phrase, the smallest possible number

[1] One of the most remarkable experiences of my life was seeing it stirred lavishly into a custard which was not all that it might have been I abjured the custard, with or without curry powder, but admired the bold adventurer.

of ingredients. Compare one of Mr. Marcel Boulestin's recipes for cooking veal with mine for roast shoulder of mutton, roast potatoes, cabbage and onion sauce—with red-currant jelly as well for those who like it. My recipe is there—all I have to add is that you must choose and cook your materials with the same devoted care that Mr. Boulestin gives to browning five or six assorted oddments in butter before he is ready to begin I could multiply examples to infinity. But, with a relishing glance aside at pig's trotters, than which there can be few things simpler to cook, I shall confine myself to comparing cold seam-tripe, with vinegar and chip-potatoes as eaten in Lancashire, with *tripes à la mode de Caen*. The French method can produce an excellent dish. But the elaboration required in its cooking seems to support the view that the raw tripe can never be as good in Caen as it is in Lancashire.

This is what I mean by the fat of the land, and it is a reality which has had its effect on the private lives of the English. There has been, God knows, and there still is, enough poverty and starvation in this green and pleasant land. I repeat that I am speaking in comparatives. But we have never had serious famines, and for many hundreds of years it has been difficult for anyone among us, save in an unusual combination of circumstances, to die of hunger. And for many hundreds of years the English peasant lived well as compared

with the peasants of other European countries. The industrial population, in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, lived anything but well. For confirmation of this you may go to Disraeli's *Sybil* and the wretched women who stand there in line at the counter of the tommy-shop to be told there by Master Joseph Diggs:

> "You never want best tea; you must take three ounces of best tea, or you shan't have nothing. If you say another word, I'll put you down four. You tall gal, what's your name, you keep back there, or I'll fetch you such a cut as'll keep you at home till next reckoning. Cuss you, you old fool, do you think I am to be kept all day while you are mumbling here? Who's pushing on there? I see you, Mrs Page. Won't there be a black mark against you! Oh! it's Mrs. Prance, is it? Father, put down Mrs. Prance for a peck of flour. I'll have order here. You think the last bacon a little too fat: oh! you do, ma'am, do you? I'll take care you shan't complain in future; I likes to please my customers. There's a very nice flitch hanging up in the engine room; the men wanted some rust for the machinery; you shall have a slice of that; and we'll say tenpence a pound, high-dried, and wery lean; will that satisfy you?"

But the industrial population always obscurely remembered the standards of the peasant families from which it sprung, and the memory has always been an inspiration to the English working classes in their demands for higher wages and better conditions. This is why the English Trade Unions

have led the Labor Movement throughout the world

There is a reflection of this in the fact that Protectionists in England have always faltered when the cry of "Dear Food!" has been raised against them "Are we," their opponents regularly ask, "to eat horse flesh, as they do in Germany?" "No, never," answer the English working classes—and for more than a generation the volume of their response has drowned the arguments of the economists on both sides. As a reasonable Englishman, I think that there is something to be said for Protection and something for Free Trade. But as an Englishman pure and simple, with no nonsense of reason about it, I know that you will have to work very hard before you can convince my fellow countrymen that anything can be for their good which may affect the food on their tables. They know what England has been able to provide and, stubbornly, they mean that one way or another England shall provide it. There is no arguing about that. It is settled before any politician can open his mouth. The best any politician can do is to explain, as plausibly as he can, how he means to maintain the standard.

The English have grown into the habit of feeling very strongly that their private lives ought to be well nourished and otherwise left alone. In this there is an element of weakness, but also a reminder of strength. There is some weakness in our willingness to let anybody who will take over the business of administration, so long as the stand-

ards are maintained. But there is strength in the feeling which displays itself as soon as the standards appear to be threatened.

* * *

Elsewhere we have suffered raids on our privacy which would have astonished our great-grandfathers very much. Take, for example, the question of education. Is a father to be allowed to bring up his children as he pleases or is he not? The answer is that he is not. When the system of State education was introduced, it was regarded primarily as a boon conferred by the rich on the poor. Hitherto it had been, for the most part, only the well-to-do who had been able to send their children to school. Now the boon of knowledge was to be placed at the disposal of everyone. It was at the same time made compulsory because it was expected that some parents would ignorantly or selfishly wish to deny their children the boon. But the emphasis was laid by the reformers on the fact that education was henceforward to be free rather than on the fact that henceforward it was to be compulsory.

Today the spirit is not quite the same. State education has proved to be a machine which has all but relatively well-to-do citizens in its grip—and perhaps even them. Some years ago there was a case which, though it was of small proportions, seemed to me to possess profound implications. In a seaside town there was a private school kept by two old ladies. The parents who sent their

children there must have been fairly poor, for they paid but little in the way of fees. But they must have sincerely felt a reason for sending their children to this establishment rather than to one where no fees would be payable at all. It was, presumably, a snobbish prejudice against the elementary schools. However that may be, the local education authorities investigated this "school" and apparently found that the teaching, though perhaps well-meant, was of a farcical standard. So they simply proceeded against the parents for not having their children educated and their action was successful

What this means is that no family is out of reach of the tentacles of the system of State education. If a school attendance officer can convince a bench of magistrates that the standard of teaching in the lower forms at Eton is materially lower than that maintained in the elementary schools, then Eton will have to shut up shop, except for boys of over the school-leaving age.[1] I do not think that that is in the least likely to happen. But it might happen with one or other of what we are accustomed to call the "crank" schools, to which some rich parents send their sons in preference to Eton. Is a child who is not compelled to attend in a classroom really performing the civic duty of being educated? Are its parents fulfilling their obli-

[1] Incidentally, it is a nice point whether parents of such boys would be able to claim Income Tax relief on the ground that, though over 16, they were being maintained at a whole-time educational establishment

gations under the law? It would not be surprising if this point were one day to be raised.

But what matters most now is that a majority of parents, whether they like it or not, must hand over the *patria potestas,* to which in England much importance has always been attached, to State-appointed officials over whom they have no control save through the remote and derisory channel of the ballot box. These children (and this, I know, is a point of feeling in many homes) may receive corporal punishment without their parents having any power to defend them save by the dubious expedient of proceedings for assault in a police court. And if the Englishman loses control of his children to this extent, what has become of the privacy of his home?

Here, however, we come to the problem of the whole English method of bringing up children. What the working-class parent is now compelled to do, the well-to-do parent has been doing reluctantly for generations. He, however, has had a certain degree of choice. He can, for whatever reasons, prefer one public school to another. The reasons are generally either irrelevant or inadequate and frequently both. But, once he has made his choice, he and his son are equally bound by it. A great part of the boy's present and future development are handed over to others. Tom Brown's father handed Tom over to be unmercifully bullied, just as Eric's father handed Eric over to the manifold temptations of St. Winifred's. The working-class parent has at least this

advantage that the children are under his eye for a part of every day. They are not removed from his ken for three periods of three months in every year. He is not yet compelled to send them to boarding school.

It is an advantage which few middle-class parents have ever esteemed. To them it has seemed (and in latter years no less with their daughters than their sons) that there is something which confers special distinction in the institution of the boarding school. Once the child is there installed, its parent confines himself very largely to grumbling at, but paying, the fees every term. Some of these schools do approach the extreme of that to which I have already referred, which the education authorities so ruthlessly put out of business. Mr. Wells, who knows something about it, has described them more than once.

I went to one such myself, a so-called preparatory school, which did not prepare me for the discovery, when I went at last to a public school, that I was at best a year behind my equals in age. I remember principally the long series of foreign language masters who, like the man in the comic song, "only came down for the day," that is to say, only on one or two days a week and not often for many weeks in succession. We never knew what happened to them. We used simply to be told that M. Quelconque was not coming today, and then the headmaster's wife would set us to work writing out irregular verbs of which she knew little more than we did.

I doubt whether many boys' schools of this sort still survive, but a streak of the same haphazard incompetency does run through an over-high proportion of schools for girls. An unusually conscientious parent once showed me a letter he had received from the board of governors of the school at which his daughters were being more or less educated. The board had previously informed him that there was to be a new headmistress and that she was a woman of experience and charm. He had, in reply, said that a statement of her degrees would be more to the point than this expression of opinion. He then learnt that she was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society! On another occasion I was searching for a school for my own daughters. In the year 1934 I received, from one possibility that had been suggested to me, a prospectus. One of the photographs with which it was lavishly decorated showed a number of pigtailed girls playing tennis, in a ladylike way and in skirts that reached almost to their black-stockinged ankles, obviously somewhere about the year 1910. I concluded that a school which was so far out of date in its prospectus would probably be no better in its methods of instruction.

This kind of thing has endured longer in schools for girls than in schools for boys. But the fact that it has been able to do so throws a useful light on the way in which the English upper and middle classes approach the question of education. It has so endured because it is only recently that

we have begun to consider the education of girls as seriously as that of boys We can, therefore, survey the subject on two levels of development, as though we were geologists inspecting the side of a canyon. What we see is a progressive decrease of snobbishness.

Since the English have given this word to the world—*le snobisme* in French and *Snobismus* in German—they may be expected to know something about its meaning, and nowhere can one more easily begin to explore its psychological content than in the field of education. Even today we are exposed, at almost every moment, to references to "the old school tie." This is an interesting example of our national habit of beginning to laugh at our own foibles after we have grown out of them. Once upon a time these badges of culture were, as it were, high cards in anyone's hand. You played the Old Rugbeian and it was bad luck if someone there could trump you with an Old Etonian. Except in certain curious layers of society, this game has ceased to be played. I did hear lately (and this I swear to as good evidence) of a woman who, when a near neighbor told her that he had been at the Whitgift Grammar School, exclaimed brightly: "Oh, what sort of school is that? You see, my brothers were at Harrow and my husband was at Eton, and there's Roedean and Cheltenham for girls, isn't there? But I don't know anything about any other schools" But it is evidence only of a vestigial rudiment. It is an extreme and extravagant

example of women carrying on what men have abandoned, of girls' schools still trying to catch up boys' schools, regardless of the fact that they are both running on the moving platform of social development.

Nevertheless, by seizing hold of such indications, one can begin to grope one's way toward the element of snobbishness which has been so important in the private lives of the English. It is, fortunately, not possible for me here even to attempt an authoritative description. A man once told me that a pupil of his, a young Indian gentleman, who wanted the Doctor's Degree of the University of London, had proposed, as subject for a thesis, a comparison between the class system in England and the caste system in India. As vainly as mischievously did I urge that the work ought to be written. My friend rightly maintained that the young Indian gentleman did not know, and had no means of knowing, what he proposed to undertake. He may have had a perfect comprehension of the caste system in India. But how many reincarnations must he have gone through before he would have been able to assess the relative social positions of a wholesale dealer in vegetables who is making £3000 a year and a clergyman who, after training in a missionary college and a period of service abroad, has been appointed to a country living of the annual value of £250? And what would he ever make of the relative positions of the children of these two men?

I will, since it may let in some light on the

whole matter, make a guess at the career of the eldest son of each. The eldest son of the greengrocer goes, much to his father's pride, to Repton and Jesus College, Cambridge, where, unfortunately, he fails to obtain anything better than a pass degree and a place in the Jesus II boat. The family business is declining by the time he takes charge of it and he is not the man for restoring it. When we last hear of him he is using what business experience he has thus gained in earning a precarious £400 a year as a superior clerk in the office of some other wholesale merchant. The clergyman's eldest son, forced, much to his father's regret, to go to the nearest elementary school, wins his way thence, with a scholarship, to the local grammar school, and, with another, to Trinity or Christchurch. He takes two brilliant firsts and becomes President of the Union. When we last hear of him he is Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office. I should like the young Indian gentleman to reckon up the social position of the third generation in each of these cases. When he has finished an easy first exercise of this nature, he might compare the status of a solicitor's clerk, whose wife expects him to wear a dinner jacket when he takes her out, with that of a fried-fish merchant who keeps a car for his wife as well as one for himself, but who always sits down to supper in his shirt sleeves when the day's business is finished He may take into account (if he thinks he can) that when the fried-fish merchant appears in the solicitor's office

the clerk will address him as "Sir" and that when the clerk makes a purchase in the fried-fish shop, the merchant will address him as "Sir." All this is right and proper, and is intuitively understood by us, but other people find it puzzling and no one can reduce it to a system.

It might be thought from what I have said that we had reached a real democracy, a working equality. But that is true only in a limited sense. At any given moment still, there are difficult frontiers between classes even if these frontiers, often based on different habits, are ill-defined. Where we approach to real democracy is in our ease of exchange between one class and another within a generation or two. This has indeed always been a feature of English life, as I have suggested in some earlier pages on our governing classes. One result of this has been to make all other nobilities, among which they seriously discuss whether a man has sixteen quarterings or only eight, look doubtfully at our peerage. We, meanwhile, with sublime Englishness, are convinced that all foreign titles of nobility are inferior or suspect as compared with ours, though we have not one which genuinely goes back as far as the Conquest.

That delusion of ours matters little as an element in our social structure. We do not pay much attention to what other nations call "good blood," but a great deal to what *we* call "good family" A "good family" is one which has belonged for two or three generations, according to the circum-

stances, to the classes which can count on having enough of the best sort of food, a reasonable amount of leisure, a reasonable degree of contact with what is going on in the world, and, of course, the best sort of education for its children. Other nations, used to the "nobility of blood," whether they like it or not, here understand us no more than we understand them. For us there long ago ceased to be any nobility in the old feudal sense. How many members of the House of Lords are there whose ancestors, in the direct male line, ever led their family retainers into any sort of battle? There might be a handful—not enough, however, to color the order to which they belong. The rest spring from families which have made themselves "good" in more or less recent times. Some of them have done this by way of the sword—for example, the Earl of Powis, the descendant of Robert Clive, who was a "writer" in the service of the East India Company and then a soldier of fortune. Others descend from the Lord Chancellors and Masters of the Rolls and Lords Chief Justice of other days.

There are not many of our peerages that, in the direct male line, go farther back than the middle of the eighteenth century. And, with us, nobility does not reside in the blood. The son of a peer is a commoner unless, and until, as eldest son he succeeds his father. The children of younger sons, if their branch of the family is not kept "good" by inherited wealth or personal talent, slide quite soon into the general ruck. So too for

that matter may even the main branch, though there the process lasts longer. From such descents have sprung many new and independent "good" and "noble" families, taking their station again on the same footing as the families of equally prosperous merchants and lawyers.

Here we see again at work the principle of "play" which seems to be an inseparable part of the English character. Our social system has so grown up as to facilitate both the ascent and the descent of its individual members.

The Church of England, here again one of our most characteristic institutions, has been wrongly regarded as naturally the bulwark of a static society. There have been among her ministers those who sought to keep the barriers impassable, who wished to make their parishioners sing:

> God bless the Squire and his relations
> And keep us in our proper stations.

But that has never been either letter or spirit of the Church's teaching. There is a familiar passage in the Catechism the true meaning of which is emphasized by its occasional ignorant misquotation. We are not told that we must do our duty "in that station of life unto which it has pleased God to call us," but "in that unto which it *shall* please God to call us." Herrick's little bird-scarer, heaving up his either hand, piped out these words when he was a candidate for confirmation. The Church of England was scrupulous to suggest no limit to his ambitions. It could not

tell, would not attempt to decide in advance, to what station God might call him. He might go for a soldier and rise from the ranks. He might become a priest and rise to be a Bishop. He might be a successful lawyer and, eventually, a minister of the Crown and a lord. Or—and this is important—he might become a middling prosperous business man. The process I have described is not confined to spectacular ascents and descents, such as result from exceptional ability or exceptional lack of it. It is active at all levels of society and its effect may be to shift the family concerned, during a generation, by only one grade or so in a hundred.

This degree of social flexibility was unknown elsewhere in Western Europe after the early centuries of the Roman Empire. On the face of it we owe this to the fact that we have never had anything resembling a noble caste, to which a man definitely either did or did not belong. What I mean is illustrated by the story of the English diplomat, a peer of the realm, whom Napoleon astonished by using the words in conversation with him, "*Nous autres nobles. . . .*" Napoleon had been born almost in squalor, had passed his early years in undoubted poverty, and was now more than anything else an obvious upstart, with no title save that which he had conferred on himself. The word *noble* was, to the Englishman, bewildering in this context: it did not make sense. But it meant something to Napoleon. It meant something also to those who could not use it of

themselves. Voltaire in France, and Goethe in Germany, suffered for this reason humiliations which would never have been possible for comparable young men of genius in England at comparable times. This aspect of the matter can be summed up by saying that here we know nothing of the *particule:* we have no national equivalent for the *de* or the *von,* or even for the idea which they convey. All that, since very early times, has been absent from our social complex.

But to say this does not take us very far. It leads us merely to two questions. Why do we enjoy this social flexibility? And, since we do enjoy it (though now we are by no means alone in our enjoyment), how does it happen that England, of all countries, has given the word "snob" to the world?

Let us try to answer the second question first. Snobbishness, whether considered as a word or as a phenomenon, belongs almost entirely to the reign of Queen Victoria Thackeray did more than anyone else to establish the word in the common vocabulary and that was because he was peculiarly, even displeasingly, sensitive to all its shades of meaning. His story of Jeames Fitzplush, the footman who made a fortune by speculation in the days of the "Railway Mania," is one of the most amusing of his minor works, but it is impossible to read it today without raised eyebrows as well as a smile.

The attitude of mind which it illustrates is one which is now passing out of our lives, leaving

only a few rotting fragments behind. What caused it was the sudden acceleration of all processes which began during the last years of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth century. The building of railways and the consequent "mania" was simply a small part of this enormous upheaval, which, here and there, flung patches of the social ocean-bottom above the surface of the waters, where the rank, rich, unsubdued ooze steamed in the unfamiliar sun. There were equally important, and far more extensive, changes and commotions in the lower depths. It was not a question of individual families rising from the bottom to the top It was a question of whole classes rising from not far off the bottom to about half-way up. These classes, coming up together, had hurriedly to formulate standards which should determine their social position. The families which were on that level of wealth already formulated rules for their own defense. Snobbishness is really the expression of the war that ensued—a war between the wife of a younger son of a not very wealthy peer, with an income of about £1200, and the wife of a young business man with an income of about £1500. Anyone who wants to write the history of this war will be able to find his materials in the Victorian novelists, especially Thackeray, Trollope, and Dickens.[1] Thackeray, as I have said, was uneasily sensitive to what was going on. Trollope took his world

[1] The earlier editions of Mrs Beeton's great work on household management should also be mentioned

as it was and faithfully set it down. Dickens saw the world as it was, disliked some of it more than Trollope did, and charged impatiently through it without forming any very subtle theories. Dickens provides the best evidence for our purpose, particularly in *Our Mutual Friend,* the most fruitful of his excursions into a territory as unmapped as though it had recently arisen from the floor of the Atlantic.

I do not know when the expression "the upper middle classes" was first invented. If one could put a date to it, that would mark the time when the results of the upheaval began to settle into more permanent places. Its mention meant that a way of reconciliation was being found for apparently irreconcilable claims. It has often been translated by the French term *la haute bourgeoisie,* with which, however, it has little in common. *La haute bourgeoisie,* in France, means those families which, under *bourgeois* governments, have advanced to positions of wealth and influence, to positions which, in England, would have insured the sowing of peerages among them. The "upper" middle classes came into existence when what had been thrown up by the eruptions of the Victorian Age was ready for the process of stratification. It consisted of families who could not have claimed membership in the aristocracy (as recorded in Debrett and Burke), but who were not for a moment disposed to give way to a number of entries in a book of reference. The principle had been conceded that the strength of England

lay in her middle classes. To be one of the "upper" middle classes means, therefore, that you are a member of a sort of sub-aristocracy.

A little while ago I heard a young man say that he supposed he belonged to the "middle" middle classes. He struck me at the time as being like Mr. Michael Arlen's trickster who created confidence by pretending to be an Armenian, because no one would say that he was an Armenian unless that at least was true. I have never heard anyone else owning to this position. But then I have never heard anyone at all own to being a member of the "lower" middle classes, which, however, we all know to exist, even if we feel a reluctance to undertake the effort of defining them.

The explanation of all this is that the people of the Victorian Age found themselves in a new world and had no precedents for dealing with it. The population had leapt up to an astonishing figure, and so had its salable productivity. And so, therefore, had the middle classes reached an astonishing degree of prosperity. They are, in the last analysis, middlemen. In one way or another, as managers, shopkeepers, bankers, lawyers, and civil servants, they facilitate the passage of consumable goods between producer and consumer. The larger the number of producers, who must also be consumers, the larger the number of eligible posts there will be among the middlemen who constitute the middle classes. It was in England that the population of producers and consumers first rose to undreamt-of heights. Here,

as a consequence, we first had a middle class that was unprecedented in numbers and wealth—and after that, all our own special problems of social stratification.

These problems are in process of being solved. The Commissioners of Inland Revenue attack them on one side, the State-aided secondary school attacks them on another. Between the two, snobbishness is disappearing. Take away from Mr. Brown at one blow a substantial slice of the modest fortune left by his father, and year by year take away from him also a substantial slice of the income he contrives to earn as, let us say, a solicitor's clerk. The result is that Mr. Brown must send his son to the nearest State-aided secondary school in which a place can be found for him. Mr. Black's father left nothing to be mulcted in death duties and Mr. Black himself does not earn enough to interest the local income-tax collector. But little Johnnie Black has shown himself a promising boy in the local elementary school; he has won a scholarship in the secondary school, and there he and little Willie Brown will compete on more or less level terms.

These are the main instruments which are at work, but there are others. Public libraries and cheap editions of the classics have for years been extending the leveling effects of State education. The old difficulty of accent was already in process of being removed by the schools and is now being positively shoveled away by the influence of the B.B.C. This did play an important part in

the Victorian stratification of classes, because it provided a verifiable standard. Mrs. Brown did *not* drop her aitches and Mrs. Black, who came in once a week as a charwoman, did. It was perfectly clear, therefore, that Mrs. Black belonged to a lower class than Mrs. Brown

The lower classes also dressed in a way that enabled the most inexpert observer to distinguish them at a glance. Nowadays, it often needs instructed scrutiny to distinguish the parlormaid on her day out from her mistress—and even instructed scrutiny can sometimes be deceived. This is due in part to mass-production of materials and garments, but also to floods of information in the popular Press, information which is eagerly read and intelligently used.

It may be said that this leveling is going on all over the world and that I am describing a change in Western civilization rather than anything specifically English. But here, I think, there is a point of capital importance to be argued. I assert that this leveling is in essence one of the distinctively English contributions to the growth of civilization. It seemed, during the Victorian Age, that we had gone over to the other side, but this, as I have shown, was due to the fact that it was a time of catastrophic change, when factors without precedent entered into the social system. As soon as the great upheaval was accomplished, and we had attained to some degree of mastery over its results, we returned with remarkable rapidity to our characteristic English way of life.

Where else in the world has the process been carried on with even greater activity? Surely in the United States, where from the earliest days of independence there was an obvious obsession with the necessity to avoid any kind of transmissible privilege, any kind of hindrance to easy passage between one class and another. This has never meant, any more in the United States than here, the ideal of equalitarianism. The ideal, which here as there has been felt and sought after in practice rather than expressed in terms of theory, has been that the individual should be able to find the place to which his abilities entitle him with as little difficulty as possible.

* * *

The ideal has, of course, never been realized. We could not have realized it without action more drastic than is in our nature. Such action would have meant a revolution, and that would have meant more interference with our private lives than we are prepared to contemplate. We prefer to tell ourselves that, given the right conditions, it will all come right in time—as it probably will. In all the more important of their problems, the English show two leading instincts, which at first appear to be contradictory, but are not. The first is to protect vested interests. The second is to see that vested interests are gently shifted, with as little pain as possible to anyone concerned. You have the makings of an English tragedy when a vested interest has been left so long that it must be

disturbed in a manner giving pain to individuals who are in themselves blameless. This is the theme of Trollope's *The Warden*. Trollope had written excellent stories before this (do not take my word for it—I refer you to Sir Hugh Walpole), but the public had not cared for them. The particular element of conflict in this book did, however, reach the public imagination, and Trollope was thenceforward a favorite author. He had hit the public imagination on a point where it was sensitive and had, incidentally, made it aware of qualities in him which hitherto it had missed.

What this goes to prove is that we do feel a strong impulse toward the equalization of the classes, not with regard to any particular moment, but with regard to the moment after the next. In some ways we may not be "good mixers," but we do believe in mixing. I do not think I am fanciful in insisting on the fact that mixing began on this soil some thousands of years ago, before ever the Romans came here, and that, with the Romans powerfully aiding, it became what one might call a territorial habit.

There are good reasons why this habit should have grown up on our soil. I must return to my old points. We have been in a position to receive the spray of all the most tumultuous movements on the Continent of Europe. The soil itself provides another good reason. Our English earth (taking it in the large sense, including the climate) is remarkably friendly to human develop-

ment All sorts of invaders came over here and seemed to prosper from their self-transplantation. There does, however, appear to have been a point at which the process could go no further. You may compare it to the point at which a solution becomes supersaturated and crystallization takes place. With the Normans, England had absorbed almost all that she wanted. The other communities she swallowed, in diminishing quantities, must be regarded as stimulating drugs rather than as substantial nutriment. It cannot be a mere freak of history that the land which has always been so much of a temptation to the invader, and was so often so effectively invaded, is now approaching a millenary celebration of virtual immunity from invasion

I suggest that there came a time when the effective compound had been made, and that, from then on, it resisted all but the smallest additions. A stable condition had been reached, a condition from which the results of many centuries of preparation might be expected. Some of those results were Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the Elizabethan adventurers. Others, such as Wren, Newton, Nelson, Shelley, and Arkwright, with all their consequences, came later.

But the most important result was the flowering of the private lives of the English, of which all these other things were only the illustrations The turning point came with the Wars of the Roses, which followed the period during which the English language first took form. This last rather

spluttering explosion of baronial ambitions was deadly enough in its effect on individuals to remove from us for ever the incubus of a caste entitled to respect because its blood had been "noble" in legendary times. In a feeble and futile way they killed one another and left the way clear for the "new nobility" which had little nonsense of "blood" about it. But even before it thus miserably vanished from the English stage, the "old nobility" had so far succumbed to the influence of the country as to permit a considerable degree of permeation, not least by way of intermarriage. What was good in them, what they had brought from genuinely feudal conditions, the idea of leadership, persisted, even if only in a reduced form. They handed it on to the country gentlemen who fought heroically in the Civil War, but few of whom would have been able to say, under strict cross-examination, whether they fought for themselves or for an immortal principle. From these it went to the "upper" middle classes. They furnished very largely the officers who, if not always very intelligently, yet always with gallantry and devotion, led the regular forces in France and Belgium in 1914. Mons and the retreat, the Marne and the Aisne and Ypres, these were soldiers' battles, to be sure, but they were also, to an extent almost unparalleled in history, battles fought by regimental officers. They were held, not without plausibility, to demonstrate the necessity for an "officer class." But the officers in question came mostly from families which, a

century or two before, would have provided recruitment only for the ranks. It is our inborn belief that everything which the term "officer class" connotes can be made out of any sort of English material within three generations at the outside. And, as a nation, we have acted on this belief, and it has worked.

This is the most important clue to the private lives of the English. As soon as the aberrations of the Victorian Age had been mastered, we returned, though at an accelerated pace, to our old way of life. What had been done in the meanwhile rendered the fulfilment of our old instinct easier than ever before. The process of mixing could be continued and it has been continued. It is *not* a process to be described by the phrase *"la carrière ouverte aux talents"*—at least in so far as the phrase is applicable to the individual alone. What we like to see is the advance of the family. There was a very able man named Smith, who was a serjeant-major in the army and became a barrister. His son became Lord Chancellor and the first Earl of Birkenhead. We may be impressed by a sudden rise to the heights, but it is characteristic of us that what we do like to see is a step or two on the way We have a common expression about "going up like a rocket and coming down like the stick" What we intend to imply is that it leaves no important results behind. Our mixing must be like the mixing of a pudding by a conscientious cook: it must be slow and thorough and the ingredients must be truly amalga-

mated. This rule applies at every level of society, and, because of it, our leveling has always been a gradual but steady leveling-up. The voice of our history, speaking from the deepest layers of our consciousness, tells us that it must be so. So here we have again, to repeat an image I used on an earlier page, the mingling of gases in a closed chamber. The image is here far from exact, since it can take no account of higher or lower levels But it does suggest a picture of private lives in England, of the whole texture of the whole of our life.

* * *

In the long run, when the final accounts are made up, that nation will be adjudged to have been the happiest which can show the greatest variety and richness in the private lives of its citizens. Or so, at least, I suppose: that is the assumption on which I write. The ideal preached in the totalitarian state seems to me to be something quite different and seems to me also to be an adroit harnessing of crowd-feeling for use in particular circumstances, but to have no other validity whatever—none, at any rate, that I can understand. I can understand a man dedicating his life to the service of his country, whether in the form of a long period of public work or in that of a quick death on the battlefield. But to make it comprehensible to me I must know that he thinks of his country as a collection of individuals. Mr. Belloc has expressed something of what I mean in three poignant lines of his poem

"The Rebel." The rebel announces the violent things he intends and then says:

> And all these things I mean to do
> For fear perhaps my little son
> Should break his hands, as I have done.

Beside this I want to put two other quotations, both of which I feel that I understand. One comes from that curious creature, George Bubb Dodington, who is hardly remembered except for the fact that he wrote:

> Love thy country, wish it well;
> Not with too intense a care
> 'Tis enough that when it fell
> Thou its ruin didst not share.

The other comes from Kipling, who said, in words that have been often (and sometimes deliberately) misinterpreted:

> If England was what England seems
> An' not the England of our dreams,
> But only putty, brass, an' paint,
> 'Ow quick we'd drop 'er! *But she ain't!*

These three utterances from three very different persons come to very much the same thing. They mean that a country exists for the sake of the human beings that live in it. To take an extreme example: if in some seismic convulsion England appeared to be sinking beneath the waves, I should not stand on the last peak of habitable land waving a Union Jack and shouting: "I will never desert old England!" If there were a boat handy,

I should push it out and do my best to steer it to other parts, murmuring as I went: "Well, that is that." The only exception, from my point of view, to be taken to George Bubb Dodington is that he would probably have taken himself and his remarkably crisp style of versification away long before the necessity had been proved. Mr. Belloc's rebel would have stayed until he was sure that there was no future for his son. Kipling's returned soldier would perhaps have assured himself more briskly that this was going to be no place for any son whom he might beget. We should all have gone, thinking a great deal of England as a place where people lived, thinking a good deal of her fields and roads and monuments, but not at all of any abstract England which transcended these things.

The idea of the totalitarian state (which is much older than Fascism and goes back to the grimmer of the German historians of the second half of the nineteenth century) presents a country, any country, as having some mystically important existence of its own. The English view is that a country, at any rate our country, is to be regarded as the sum of human well-being which it has created. And the answer to the sum cannot be reached save by totting up all the private lives for which England has been responsible.

That, in all situations, will be our first thought, and the fact that it will be is not without importance now. There are those who urge upon us the idea of the totalitarian state and seem unable

to understand why, since it has been so well received elsewhere, it does not go down here. It goes down well only where the sum of private lives does not add up to a satisfactory amount. Here, on balance, we are satisfied that the figures at the foot of the column are as good as can be expected. This does not mean that we should not like them to be much higher. It does mean that they are good enough to prevent us from being led away by a phantasm called country, state, nation, or race. When all is said and done, the community must justify itself to the individual as much as the individual to the community. God knows that in many, too many, cases the community called England fails to justify itself to the individual Englishman. But, if we take the most practical point of view possible, we must own that it has justified itself to a sufficiently large number, since we have had no revolution here and have now no sign of anything that could be called a revolutionary movement attracting any support. (It must be interjected, for the sake of clearness, that both Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler officially regard themselves as the leaders of successful revolutions)

The last approach to a revolution in England was Chartism, which, as I have already said, was taken up by the police and went quietly. Communism will always be a more attractive proposition to the English than Fascism, because in theory it expresses the English ideal of leveling. But before it can succeed, it will have to become much more English than any brand of it that we have

yet seen. It will have to abandon all of what it calls its "ideology," throw overboard the class war and the dictatorship of the proletariat. If it does not, it will find itself interfering with the private lives of English families and their resistance will be enough to stifle it.

Here I hold no brief for or against either Communism or Fascism. My only business is to point out the reason why no system of totalitarianism could possibly succeed here. It would imperil too far the freedom of private lives which we value too much. I might not, quite possibly, like the idea of marrying a Jewess, but I shall not allow any official to hold a position where he could conceivably inquire into my wife's racial origins. My freedom to marry and to do a great many other things in my private capacity is of so much value to me that any proposed new régime will have to show me overwhelming reasons before I give it up. The strength of the English is that no such reasons can be shown. We all have grievances, but few of us have any likely to be comparable with those that a Fascist government would produce.

Or so we think—and in such matters what is thought by enough of us is what is finally important. God knows, again! that there are men, women and children in England living lives that no human being ought to be asked to live. You will find some of them in the back-to-back houses of the North or in the "caravan-towns." Even so, you will not find in this country a sum of human

misery equal to what existed in the first three or four decades of the last century—and then we, collectively, did not think it worth a revolution. Even the most sensitive of us do not think the grievances that are left worth a revolution now. We believe in doing things gradually, and all history supports us in the belief that we are capable of doing things gradually. The decisive argument is that we have built up a treasure of private lives which we shall not willingly offer to the risks of an upheaval. In her political stability (irritating as it sometimes is) we can see England's satisfaction with what she has achieved—a reasonable degree of richness and variety in the lives of a reasonably large number of her inhabitants and a prospect of better things for all her inhabitants.

VII

Playing Fields

In years when we have been beaten by Australia at cricket, by the United States at golf and polo, by New Zealand at Rugby football, and at lawn tennis by almost every other country in the world except Annam and Bulgaria, we have always one infallible way of keeping up our spirits. We tell ourselves that it was we who taught humanity to play games. We, in fact, nursed the pinion that impelled the steel.

It is not quite true There *were* games played in other countries before England became a nation. Polo comes from Persia. "Real tennis," from which our lawn tennis derives, originated in the courtyards of castles in medieval France—which accounts for the architectural peculiarities of the courts in which it is played. So did the game of fives. From the survival of these two games we know that there must have been all sorts of games, the rules of which were made up in accordance with local conditions or the mood of the moment. Those were the happy days when no one framed a rule to distinguish between amateur and professional! They simply enjoyed themselves for an hour or two of leisure and then went off to the business of the day.

But in two different ways, and at two different times, we did guide the world toward its present passion for organized sport. During the Middle Ages and for a long time afterwards, games of the village-green order were played here far more freely than anywhere else in Europe, and for a very good reason. As I have pointed out in an earlier chapter, if England can (with apologies to Dr. Coulton) be described as having been "merrie" in medieval times, it is because she then enjoyed a relative freedom from warfare. Her soil was not frequently ravaged by contending armies and her people were not obliged to spend most of their time either in repairing the damage that had been done, or in making ready against the threat of further damage. Even the Wars of the Roses were what we might call "country house matches." They were conducted by amateurs with the help of a few selected professionals. There was little that can be called raiding, little wanton destruction of the enemy's land. It is not good sense to lay waste your enemy's land when your main endeavor is to become lord of it yourself.

Hence the people of England lived less than their fellows on the Continent under the expectation that their crops would be destroyed and that sooner or later their young men, the best tillers of the earth, would have to serve as soldiers The chances of war played, by comparison, a small part in the mind of the medieval Englishman. He was free to think about other things, even about

enjoying himself. Thus it comes about that we owe our first obscure references to the game of football to the fears of the Government that it was ousting archery as a recreation for young men. The young could see no immediate necessity for learning to shoot, but the authorities felt that archery might still be desirable for the defense of the realm.

Another time came and, during years when the Continent was scarred by fighting of a different sort, we took a further step in advance of the world, though not one of a particularly sportive nature. We were the first of the nations to become industrialized, and it seemed then that "merrie England" had, so far as the greater part of the population was concerned, disappeared for ever. About this time one writer says of football: "It was formerly much in vogue among the common people, though of late years it seems to have fallen into disrepute and is little practised." The slaves of the "Satanic mills" had not the leisure for playing games—let alone the physical strength.

But, as good times improved throughout the nineteenth century, as hours of work were reduced and wages increased, the old desires, surviving from generations of ancestral habit, began to reassert themselves. But now they were expressed in a new form. Hitherto only the rich had been able to pay athletes to perform for their entertainment. There had always been professional boxers and wrestlers and the like on whom their rich admirers used to make bets and to whom

they sometimes used to pay fees or make handsome presents. But there were so far none who could safely depend on what we now call "the public" for their livelihood.

The first of our modern professionals were the cricketers. They began on the same level as the boxers, the wrestlers and the jockeys. The rich men who enjoyed playing the game for some reason preferred batting to bowling. They were, therefore, ready to pay bowlers to make up their sides. They also wanted groundsmen and coaches, and they were ready to pay for these services, too. These cricketers were, and thought of themselves as, menials. It was usual during tours for one of them, who might not be the least valuable man on the side, to be told off to look after the baggage. It is a long way from these morning stars to, say, Mr. Herbert Sutcliffe, who held the rank of captain in the army before he proved himself as a professional cricketer, who is the proprietor of a flourishing sports business, and who is sometimes referred to by other Yorkshiremen, more or less affectionately, as "t' Mayor o' Poodsey." Catch Mr. Sutcliffe carrying any amateur's bags, save in the way of helpfulness when it is a matter of catching a train!

The first step toward the modern order was taken in 1846 by William Clarke, of Nottingham, when he formed his All-England Eleven to tour the country, playing local sides, generally against odds. Clarke kept a sharp eye on the gate money, without which his enterprise would have been

senseless. The first team which ever went overseas, that which visited Canada and the United States in 1859, was wholly composed of professionals. Each of them made about £90, after all expenses had been paid. The first English team to tour Australia, 1861, was selected by a firm of caterers, Messrs. Spiers and Pond, who are said to have profited by not less than £10,000.

Thus were discovered the possibilities of a new activity in sport on a sound financial basis. The slaves of the Industrial Revolution were emerging from the factories with a few hours in every week in which they wanted to be entertained, and, what was more, they had a little money in their pockets. The process then begun has developed with ever-increasing rapidity down to our own day. The crowds willing to pay to watch great cricket and football matches have multiplied up to, and beyond, the limits of the grounds that have been built.

A simple instance will serve as an illustration. In 1909 there was a Test Match between England and Australia at Lord's. By cajolery I obtained a two-shilling piece and a packet of sandwiches, arrived at Lord's an hour after play had begun, paid a shilling to go in, found an excellent place to sit in, and had a thoroughly enjoyable day. (It would have been more enjoyable still if England's batting had not been so miserable.) In 1930, wishing to see the latest repetition of the same match, I booked my seat in February and was just in time to be allowed to pay ten times as much for

it (This time it was England's bowling which made me writhe in the seat for which I had paid so much.) On the first day of that game, queues began to form outside the turnstiles of Lord's five or six hours before the beginning of play. The same, and indeed much more, has happened with the outstanding occasions in football. The Stadium at Wembley could be filled four or five times over with those who wish to watch the Cup Final

It is in this sense that we have taught the world to play games. The other nations followed us into the prison of industrialism and, in due course, followed us out again—at any rate into the exercise-yard of the prison—and, when they were out, showed a similar response to the appeal of organized sport.

One might almost, in unsympathetic mood, call Association Football a weed of the industrial field. It has run riot over a large part of the globe. Once, not long after the War, when these things were not so apparent as they are now, I happened to be traveling on a Sunday evening between Alessandria and Genoa. I had been thinking of Alessandria, the city founded by the Lombard League, under the auspices of Alexander III, for the defense of the Papacy against Frederick Barbarossa, and of Genoa, the city of the proud merchant princes who so long ago disputed the mastery of the Mediterranean with their rivals in Venice. But, it seemed, Genoa United, or some such team, had given Alessandria Rovers a sound

beating on their own ground, and were now going home with their exulting supporters. Barring certain obvious but unimportant details of language and physical type, I might as well have been in a train between a town in Yorkshire and a town in Lancashire The rattles were used with the same enthusiasm, and my first visit to Genoa was greeted by a brass band, though it was not meant for me. Local differences are, of course, sometimes rather striking. On some South American grounds, I am told, they search spectators for firearms before letting them through the turnstiles. But, allowing for climate and national temperament, the spirit is the same. After all, even in England, though we do not shoot one another at football matches, referees, linesmen, and even players have been known to be the subjects of mob violence.

This development of the connection between industrial civilization and professional football can be traced even within the bounds of England herself. When Soccer first began to be a great organized game, in the eighties, supremacy suddenly passed from London to the industrial North. In 1883 the Cup went from Clapham Rovers to a Lancashire club, and it came south again only once in the years before the War. During those years southern Soccer enthusiasts almost resigned themselves to a permanent inferiority. But for the last decade or so all that has been changed. The industrialization of the South of

England is reflected in the fact that there are now four southern clubs in the First Division of the Football League. One of them, the Arsenal, may be reckoned the most formidable club in the Kingdom: for years past it has every year either won the highest honors or made a very close approach to them. This does not mean that there has been a development of football genius among the peoples of the South. Players can be, and are, recruited not merely from all parts of England, but from Scotland, Ireland and Wales as well. What it does mean is that southern spectators can now produce the money needed to put a first-rate team into the field.

* * *

So far I have been trying to prove that if England holds a unique position in the world of modern sport, it is because she led the other nations into it. But there is more than that to be said. If we can say it, however, we shall have to begin with cricket all over again.

Cricket for the English stands in a special position, since the mere name has acquired a significance which extends outside the world of sport. It remains, in general estimation, our national game. It is, nevertheless, one that we have not been able to persuade many other peoples to play. A map of the world showing the places where it is really popular would reveal the fact that the Dominion of Canada is not one of them. Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India, the West Indies, and Pennsylvania, Holland, and

Denmark—these are the main homes of cricket outside England.[1]

Elsewhere our devotion to this particular pastime is regarded with a sort of bewildered respect —and I am not sure that our own attitude has not something of the same element in it. But we do still ask whether any language can provide a parallel to our phrase: "It isn't cricket!"

We ask this question rather less often, I fancy, than we did, since there was a controversy between us and some other cricketers as to what, after all, *is* cricket. And what, after all, *is* cricket? The phrase means, if it means anything, that this is, above all others, a game in which the spirit of fair play both informs and transcends the rules, in which the players regard the interests of the game as superior both to their own and to those of their side. This includes a perfect embodiment of the team spirit and the resolution of the individual to accept collective defeat and individual disappointment alike with cheerful fortitude.

To my mind this suggests an ideal so stern as to make the umpire's injunction "Play!" a blood-curdling mockery. I speak, however, as a disloyal cricketer who always asked to be allowed to field at fine-slip, so that he could edge into the shelter of the wicket-keeper while the ball was being de-

[1] In the year 1920 I read in a newspaper a paragraph to the following effect. "The first Test Match ever played between Bavaria and Prussia ended yesterday at Munich in a win for the home side by seven wickets" No inquiry that I have been able to make, in England or in Germany, has thrown any light on this mysterious affair

livered. Let me, therefore, confine myself to asking how far this ideal is realized in practice.

In practice, it is no more conspicuous than in any other game. If one ventures to say this, one is referred to the village green, where, according to popular legend, the purest cricket is played. But consider the village green! Consider the jealousies, the backbitings, the intrigues every week when the team is chosen. Consider the fast bowler who is sulky when he is knocked about, and, given one more over, aims every ball of it at the batsman's head and sends each one of them out of the wicket-keeper's reach for four byes. Consider the reluctance and the scowls of the batsman who has been given out leg before. You may also consider, very often, the motives of the umpire who has made the decision. Anybody who has played on village greens will willingly talk to you about umpires who have two ears, one of them very deaf to appeals against members of the side he favors.

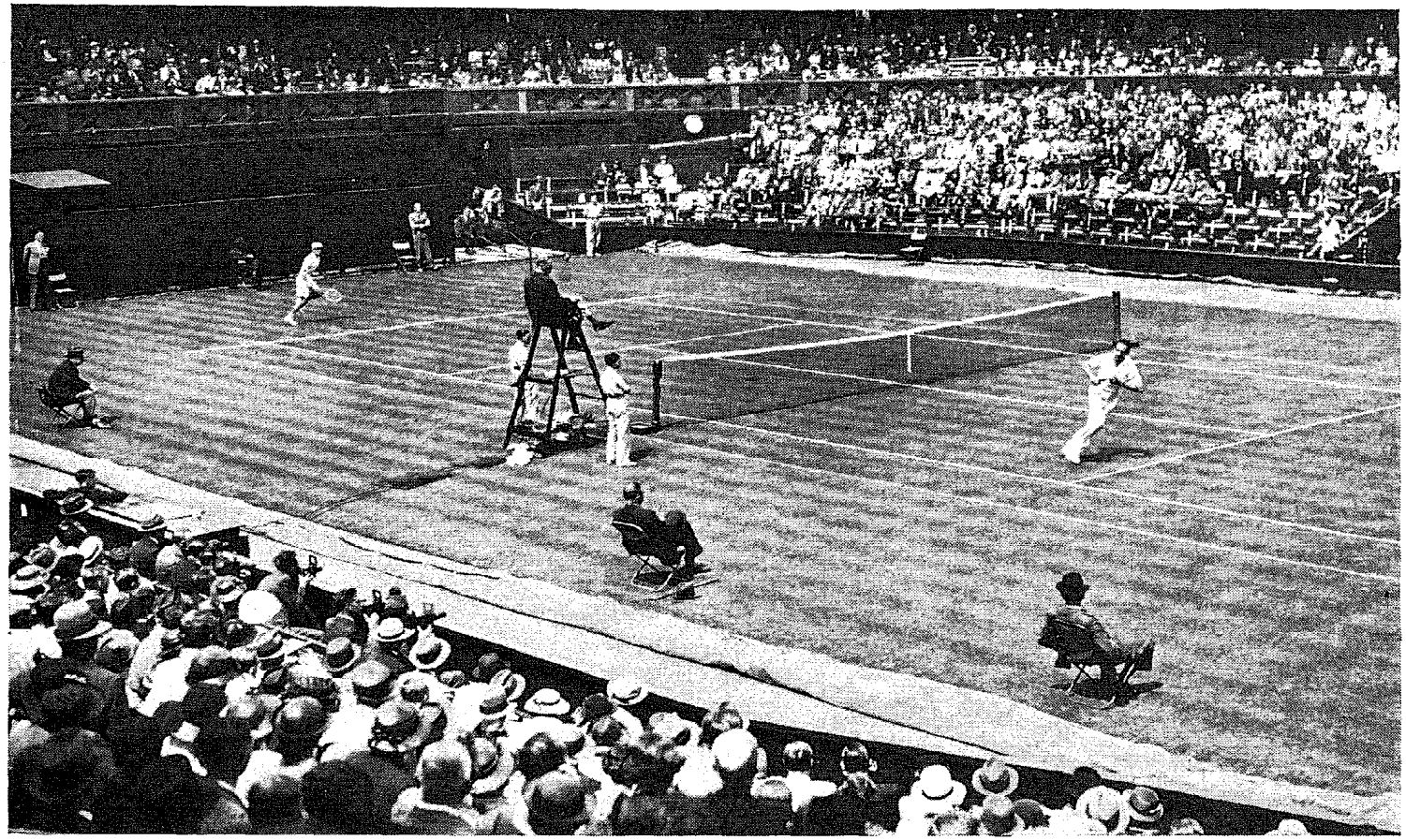
The historical embodiment of cricket is Dr. William Gilbert Grace. "Did he cheat?" said a professional who had played under him for many years. "Not he—he was too clever to need to!" Once, while the field was changing over, he said to a troublesome batsman: "Quick! Look at those wild swans!" "Where?" asked the batsman, staring, as directed, straight into the sun. "Oh, they're gone now," said the Old Man, and then in a whisper to the bowler: "Slip him a fast one, Fred."

When little Bobby Abel died a few months ago,

Sport and General Press Agency, London.

W. G. GRACE, NOTED CRICKETER

"Did he cheat? Not he—he was too clever to need to!"



Sport and General Press Agency, London.

CENTER COURT, WIMBLEDON

"My definition of an amateur is one who plays a game because he enjoys it, who provides his own playing fields and his own instruments, and who does not care whether anyone is watching him or not."

there was a story told about him and Grace. At first Bobby's form was capricious and he was not even sure of holding his place in the Surrey team. But one day he had just reached his highest score, 96, when the luncheon interval came "Don't you worry, Bobby," Grace said. "You shall have your century. I'll go on myself after lunch and give you a full-pitch to leg." After lunch, sure enough, the promised full-pitch came down and Bobby, swinging at it with all his strength, hit it straight into the hands of the fieldsman whom the Old Man had placed on the boundary to catch it. As Abel went disconsolately out, Grace wagged his beard at him and said: "I couldn't do more for you than that, could I, Bobby?"

It would be easy to fill a hundred pages with similar stories about Grace and other eminent cricketers. Few cricket stories are well authenticated and any one of all these might be false But it does not signify at all whether they are false or true. They are told every day by cricketers, and with relish. A little sharp practice is as much a part of the game as the in-swinger—and a considerably older part. Or it used to be as much a part of the game. The newspapers have done much harm in this respect. The limelight they throw on any occurrence out of the ordinary has not only an illuminating but also a magnifying property, and is capable of making a national crisis out of what the twenty-two men concerned could easily settle among themselves, if only they were left alone. Once a cricketer was chasing a

ball to the boundary when he realized that the batsmen had already run four and would certainly run a fifth before it could be thrown back to the wicket. Instead of picking it up, therefore, he kicked it against the fence. There ensued a pleasant little wrangle, the batsmen arguing that this was illegitimate tactics. The umpires upheld them, the captain of the fielding side probably reprimanded the fielder either for indiscreet zeal or for letting it be seen what he was doing, and before anybody had sat down to dinner that night the incident was no more than an item in the capacious memory of cricketers, to be pulled out now and again as proof of the curious problems that can arise. But it had been reported and the newspapers smelt a story. So it buzzed on for two or three days more. Everybody concerned was hypnotized into taking it seriously and making solemn "statements" to the Press. Eminent players of the past also gave their opinions—there are few classes in the community from which an appeal for an opinion meets with a more willing response—and the spirit of cricket received a certain degree of injury, even if the "spirit of fair play" enjoyed a considerable amount of publicity.

The dirty dog who invented the phrase, "It isn't cricket," did a considerable disservice not only to the game which he blasphemously presumed to mention, but also to England. It suggests that we claim some sort of a monopoly of "fair play" in games. We do not, though it is possible that, because of our longer experience, we adventure

outside the rules with less crudeness than other people. It is not really characteristic of the Englishman to pay complete respect to a code of rules, and he becomes restive when busybodies talk too much about an unwritten code. He insists on there being a margin outside the written rules and his demand would be made meaningless by any definition of the width of the margin. In such things he is a pragmatist. The only test is one that must be separately applied in each individual instance. It is—was it or was it not a good game?

On the last occasion on which I played Rugger—and it was a long time ago—I was indignantly and sincerely and correctly accused of obstruction in an illegal sense by a player on the other side who, ten minutes before, had dealt me an indignant and sincere but still illegal and painful blow on the nose. I did my best to injure him before the game was over, but never had a good opportunity, and he came back to tea with me. It had been an enjoyable game—though it was only between the fourth fifteens of our respective colleges. But if it had been in an international match, if we had both been famous players instead of the rabbits that we were, and (note this) *if someone had noticed the two incidents,* the newspapers would have pursued the matter for a week in articles of the style of "What is Rugger Coming To?"

At present a good deal of fuss is being made about the behavior of footballers of all kinds. The players of both Rugger and Soccer seem to be

committing all sorts of misdemeanors which I do not clearly understand, but which vastly exercise large numbers of vocal persons who do not play football themselves. Meanwhile the public continues to pay large sums of money every Saturday to watch the performances of these criminals—from which I deduce that they have not yet, as it is constantly prophesied that they will do, ruined the game and forfeited public favor. Last season I was taken to an important match in the First Division of the Football League, and what most struck me there I now record for what it may be worth. The supporters of the home side applauded both sides with equal enthusiasm for clever play. But they never rebuked any member of the home side for what they considered "dirty play," in which matter, so far as I was able to judge, dishonors were about even. Twenty times did the man behind me bellow: "Oh, dirty, Smith, dirty!" Smith was not playing for Knightsbridge United: he was playing left-back for Bruddersford Wanderers. About twelve times, according to my reckoning, the rules justified the bellow. They would have justified it as often if it had been uttered against Smith's opposite number in the home team, but only a handful of Bruddersford supporters, in a remote corner of the ground, seemed to notice the enormities of Knightsbridge's left-back. In the end the visitors won by the odd goal in five and we all made for the nearest saloon bar. There I was introduced to the supporter of the home side who had been

bellowing in my ear "Grand game," he said fervently. "Best game I've seen this season." My own belief is that his bellows were really shouts of applause on which only convention had imposed a mask of rebuke.

* * *

There is much unorthodoxy in what I have said. But I am prepared to maintain that it is, every word of it, true, and I hope that all Englishmen who take the trouble to examine their own consciences will support me. I do want to make it clear that the cow (if for once I may speak Australian) who put into currency the expression, "It isn't cricket," was not expressing anything which has a genuine seat in the minds of his fellow countrymen. The smugness which continues to use these words is only a secondary English characteristic. It is far more like the English to exclaim: "It was a good game, whatever happened," or, alternatively, "It was a poor game. All the players seemed to be afraid of the book of rules."

A good game, however fought and won, is what we most enjoy. That is what keeps organized and professional sport still as a healthy element in our life. But it is not to be denied that organization and professionalism do open channels by which unhealthy influences may creep in. The management of a team is a job like another, a job on which a man relies for his own sustenance and that of his family. He wants his career to run along smooth, foreseeable lines, and therefore he

wants as much regulation and regimentation as he can get. If any stricter enforcement of the rules, or an enactment of new rules, will make his job more secure, he is all for it. Who can blame him? Still, though less often than formerly, the praisers of times past point to the professional player of games as a sign of degeneration. In my view the greatest danger comes from those who draw salaries but do not play, or, like the secretaries of some county cricket clubs, play, but draw their salaries on another account. I have no intention of attacking these admirable officials. We could not do without them. The public in large numbers wants to witness games and there is no reason why the public should be denied. But the arrangements involve much office work no one can be expected to do for nothing. Above all, it must be stated that no one makes very much out of team games in England. In Association Football, a star whose popularity, while he lasts (and that is not long), is comparable with Mr. George Robey's, may not draw more than £8 a week. The dividends which may be drawn by shareholders in the great football clubs are so severely restricted as to make investment in them something worse than a speculative proposition. The salaries paid to the managers of these clubs are ridiculous in relation to the turnover concerned. The managers are the persons responsible for a good show or a bad one next Saturday afternoon, for the club's place in the league table, and, therefore, ultimately, for the flow of patrons through the

turnstiles They are the impresarios, the Cochrans, the Ziegfelds of this side of the entertainment world and, if their risks are less, their rewards are out of all proportion smaller.

If we led the way (and we did) in the commercialization of sport, some kind of instinct early made us take steps to insure that no one should make very much money out of it. Boxing has admittedly escaped from this sort of control, and so have two or three other forms of spectacle which do not involve team work, but I should doubt whether in the long run a fortune has been found in any one of these others. We take good care, indeed, that it shall be worth no one's while to engage in sport for what he can get out of it. Or —and this is not an unimportant reservation— worth the while of no one who would be a commercial success anywhere else. Some there are, of course, who by the employment of their natural talents get a reward worth many times more than they are paid, just as poets do, simply because they cannot put their hearts into anything else. I see no good reason why these, and the other performers who delight the public, should not be paid the little that they are.

To my mind the real danger is not in professionalism or in commercialization, but in organization. Commercialization, as I have shown, has never amounted to very much. As for professionalism, it seems to me that either a sport is professionalized or it is not. And, again, it seems to me that it is professionalized as soon as it be-

gins to ask for money at the gate. What it does with the money taken at the gate does not affect the question. But in many games—and lawn tennis is a conspicuous example—professionalism does not end with the men at the turnstiles or the groundsmen or the ball boys or the officials at their desks. It extends through the whole range of persons concerned, up to the authoritative gentlemen who take their pay not in cash but in authority. They make themselves responsible for an enormous turnover in money every year and they really *are* responsible. They have involved the game in expenditure on a scale which the players could not possibly meet by themselves. When Mr. Fred Perry last won the Singles at Wimbledon, he was still technically an amateur. But he was playing on a court, and under conditions, which he could not have provided for himself. My definition of an amateur is one who plays a game because he enjoys it, who provides his own playing field and his own instruments, and who does not care whether anyone is watching him or not. The Lawn Tennis Association spends more time than most governing bodies in the whole world of sport, in determining whether this person or that is an amateur or not. I do think that the ex-players who take their pay partly in the form of the privilege of making these decisions might spend some of their time in determining whether the game of lawn tennis has not, *en bloc,* forfeited its amateur status.

I am aware that these considerations apply to

all popular games. Cricket does not escape from them, nor any form of football. Not even the village green is exempt. They have there got it into their heads that games are played to be watched and that therefore those who do not play ought to pay most of the expenses. This tribute is generally levied by electing neighbors who seem to have a little money as vice-presidents. If there are not enough vice-presidents, cricket clubs and football clubs languish and die. There has recently been an attempt to create a popular "gate" for polo—and why not, since it is a most attractive game to watch? The attempt, however, does not include an acknowledgment of the fact that all those playing on grounds, the upkeep of which partly depends on gate money, are to that extent professionals.

The word "danger" was used a little while back and must be justified. The danger comes from those who wish to commercialize sport without —and this, up to a point, is to their credit[1]—allowing anybody to profit from the commercialization. I have no quarrel with the organization of sport as a spectacle. No one who has ever watched a big crowd at a keen, close-run football match could possibly quarrel with what gives so much pleasure to so many people. Nor do I think it fair to say, as many do, that nowadays we watch games instead of playing them. It simply is not true. The number of young men and women who

[1] Boxing as a sport has certainly not been improved by the entrepreneurs who make money by promoting matches.

play games has gone up by leaps and bounds and is still going up every year. But what increasingly happens also is that the organization devised for games which are played for the sake of spectators is applied to games which are played for the sake of the players. We have lost sight of the grand principle, first enunciated by G. K. Chesterton, that, if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing badly.

Games where gate money is the essence of the matter cannot be played on that principle. The ground that has been laid out, the pavilions and the stands which have been built, must at least earn the interest on the mortgage. The paid officials must receive their salaries on the due dates. It is a business and must be run like a business, and there must be a recognized code to which other businesses in the same line can be made to conform. Thus, for example, the Arsenal Club must be in a position to know what players it can call on during the season, so that its regular customers will not be disappointed. Elaborate regulations for the engagement of players are therefore justified, and though I have never been able quite to understand what they are, or to follow the controversies and quarrels which they sometimes produce, I know that mine is only the natural bewilderment of an outsider. But when I find that there is a row going on as to whether a certain young man shall, without being paid for it, play football or box or swim or whatever for the Great Western Bank or the Old Muggletonians, and that

the question will be decided at a special meeting of some governing body—when I read all these things, I rub my eyes and say to myself: "Are these young men doing these things for fun, or aren't they?"

In the field of games it seems to me that we have already gone part of the way which we must hope that England will travel in all fields. There *was* once a "merrie England," in which, for the reasons I have suggested, the people did play games and enjoy themselves more than in most other parts of the world. Toward that state we are now returning. It is now possible for domestic servants to play tennis and hockey and basket ball, whereas less than a generation ago the idea of their playing any sort of game would have been considered ridiculous. The urban population is returning not only to the country, but also to the playing field. But when it gets there it finds it controlled and regimented, with the shadows of a governing body dark across it. Governing bodies are usually made up of people who ceased to play some time ago, some of them never having played very well at any time. It is not surprising that they should want to assert their authority by making rules about anything that happens to attract their notice. In this they are abetted by the Press, since any proposed new rule is a story, and a still better story if it happens to involve a conflict between those who play and those who have ceased to play. And this interest taken by the Press reflects in a distorted way the interest

taken by the public in sport as an organized spectacle.

It does seem to me that we should come nearer to recapturing the old spirit of "merrie England" if we made a clear definition between games that are played as spectacles, games, that is to say, where gate money is taken, and games which are played for their own sake. It is an unlucky fact that people who do make this distinction usually do it in a fit of moral indignation and confuse more issues than they elucidate. Some of them talk bitterly about "paid gladiators"—though I think gladiators were not often paid, being more often slaves. Others beg us to remember that professionals enjoy the games which they are paid for playing. Of course they do. For that matter, I am enjoying the writing of this book. But I could not and should not write it unless I were going to be paid for it. I do not attempt to compare myself as a writer with, say, Mr. Hammond, of Gloucestershire, as a batsman. But there is this approach to a similarity between us, that he would never be able to make two hundred runs against good bowling, unless there were some money put up by someone else, any more than I could write this book in the absence of a publisher in good standing at his bank. Mr. Hammond and I are in a different category from those who do the same things purely for the fun of it.

Let me hurry to say that I do not want to increase the number of people who write books purely for the fun of it. But I think that an

increase in the number of people who play games purely for the fun of them would be a good thing. And I think, too, that the people who already do this ought to be freed as far as possible from the tyranny of governing bodies and their tendency to draw up codes which grow until they darken the sky of pure fun.

And here, once again, I am bound to return to cricket, muttering apologies as I do so. This was one of the first of all popular games to be organized. Its organization goes back so far that a cricket annual in my possession, only some fifty years old, prints the rules for betting on single-wicket matches. Probably, before this annual was published, single-wicket matches had ceased to be an object of the gambler's attention. But the rules survive as evidence of our modern game's origin in an earlier age. You will not find this code in the current *John Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack*. But there is something else you will not find there, the absence of which is important. There is no definition of the difference between an amateur and a professional. The governing bodies of other sports periodically go into convulsions over this difference and emerge from their throes with the oddest decisions. Thus, an amateur player of lawn tennis may write a book about the game and illustrate it with pictures of himself in the appropriate attitudes. He will remain an amateur, even if he makes £10,000 out of the sales of the book. But if he makes a film, in which his atti-

tudes are dynamic instead of static, and is paid for doing it, he becomes a professional.[1]

This distinction is asinine, but it is the sort of decision that is likely to be made when a sport that is already essentially professionalized seeks to draw its own line between professionals and amateurs. The governing body of cricket is the M.C.C. How it came to occupy that position is something that nobody really knows. There, however, it is, and, whatever blunders it may have made, it has never uttered so much as a single chirrup on the difference between amateurs and professionals. Everybody knows that W. G., who played so many times for the Gentlemen at Lord's, made a good living out of the game—though, it is generally agreed by those who were intimate with him, not so fat a living as he could have made if he had been a grasping man. Everybody knows that in post-war years there was a man who played as a professional for a county and then established a residential qualification for another which he captained as an amateur, while drawing a salary as secretary. Such goings-on would have shaken the world of lawn tennis or any of the worlds of football to the base. The world of cricket did not give a single damn. And why should I not give the name of the man of whom I am speaking? There was once Jupp of Sussex, and then there was Mr V. W. C. Jupp, captain

[1] A queer case has arisen—that of a book which becomes a moving picture when the reader flips over the pages with his finger at a proper rate This will give the Lawn Tennis Association something to think about.

and secretary of Northamptonshire, and he was, and is, a very fine player, no matter how his name may be printed on the score card. He makes a good illustration of the wisdom of cricket. Whether he was Jupp, or Mr. V. W. C. Jupp, and which door of the pavilion he issued from, were matters between him and his county committee, not the business of the governing body. You might think that this policy would lead to doubtful cases, but it never has done so yet. Every year teams are chosen to represent Gentlemen and Players at Lord's: I do not think that there has ever been a dispute as to the side on which any given man should play.[1]

This may sound like a plea for cricket as the best of all games. I myself think it is the best of all games. I like its leisurely rhythm. I like its succession of separate incidents—each lasting from the moment when the bowler begins his run and the ball is in play to the moment when the ball is "dead" These incidents, whether at Lord's in a Test Match or on the village green, compose themselves into a pattern which I find much more enchanting than the pattern made by any other game.

It may be the fact that I am thus devoted to

[1] While I was reading these pages in order to remove from them as many mistakes as possible, Mr Hammond publicly announced that he had become an amateur It was entirely his own business All he had to do was to state his intentions Unfortunately he chose to make something of an Affair of State of it In so doing he gave countenance to the idea that a man's amateur or professional status is a matter of huge concern to the world at large So far it has not been so in cricket, and any change would be regrettable

cricket which makes me believe that this game will show the way out of the maze into which it has led all the others. Cricket is suffering at present from a prolonged and painful crisis, and veterans write letters about it to *The Times,* and the M C.C. appoints committees. The crux of the matter is that not a season goes by without one or other of the first-class counties howling aloud in the agonies of dissolution. So far no county that has ever been reckoned in the first class has receded from that proud position. Some of them go on, year after year, winning two or three matches—or possibly none—and then, at the end of the summer, announcing that they do not know how long they will be able to carry on Somehow they always do: money is found from somewhere. My instinct is to pray that one of these days it may not be found and that one of the clubs which depend on gate money may be obliged to withdraw from the holy circle of the county championship and go back to a less ambitious life. Others may see that not much harm has been done and so be tempted to follow. We shall then have fewer games played within the framework of the organized County Championship. We may have more, and at least as good, played outside it.

The organization of games was one of the things in which we had to be worse before we were better. Cricket, a peculiar game, for which England must take the full responsibility, began the process of getting worse, and dragged after it all our other games and then all the games of all the

world. It is perhaps only my idiosyncrasy which makes me think that cricket may point the way back to the general idea of playing games for fun. If there could be a final reckoning in this matter we should not be held blameless—even supposing that we managed to disown the detestable hog who invented the phrase, "It isn't cricket." My hope is that we (especially cricketers) may begin some kind of rot in the organization and get back to games for their own sake. There are in England many thousands of young men and women who would do this if they were not harassed by the existence among them of persons desiring to be second Fred Perrys and second Dorothy Rounds They will have a chance of doing so when we realize that as soon as a game is over, it is over, and that for another twelve months it will not matter very much who was champion last year.

VIII

London and the Provinces

It so happened that, when I was in the early stages of planning and writing this book, I had to make an extensive tour of some of the great cities in the provinces. When I returned, I took out my provisional list of chapters and added another heading—under which I am now writing. The Americans have a saying to the effect that "New York is not America." I doubt whether the statement that "London is not England" can be made quite as emphatically. But I had been reminded that it is something which has to be said in whatever tone of voice. London is not the whole of England, not even a compendium or a mirror of it. This, at least, I had well realized.

At about this time I encountered in a newspaper a story of an Englishman of some distinction who was introduced unexpectedly to a foreign royalty. He happened to be a professor in one of the universities of Scotland. "Ah," said the royalty, "you are a Scotchman, Mr. Smith?" "No," Mr. Smith replied, "I'm a Yorkshireman." "Of course—an Englishman, Mr. Smith." "No, I'm not," said Mr. Smith doggedly. "I'm a Yorkshireman." The chances are that Mr. Smith had become too much confused to know quite what

he was saying. But there are always reasons for the words we utter when our minds go a little astray. I suggest that what was in Mr. Smith's mind was that, to foreign royalty, an Englishman meant a Londoner—and he knew that, whatever he might be, he was not that and did not want to be. I am not sure that Mr. Smith's grandson will be properly conscious of such a distinction. The line between London and the provinces is being blurred a little more every day. A friend of mine once remarked that among the benefits of broadcasting was that it enabled every English child to be born within the sound of Bow Bells. But Mr. Smith and a good many more millions like him are conscious of the existence of that line—and do not want it to be obliterated.

But natural conditions have had something to say to this. The size of England has had much to do with the rough-hewing of her ends. As Mr. Belloc has remarked, she was always too large to be anything but a kingdom and too small for provinces, in the real sense, to rise up as rivals to the seat of government. We never had any swaggering Dukes of Burgundy to claim equality with the King at Westminster, no Duchess of Brittany whom the King must marry to consolidate his realm. The Percys once attempted to fill such a semi-independent position, but it did not end well for the Percys. No English city, outside London, has ever attained even the cultural independence of Munich, Dresden or Weimar. Until less than two centuries ago, there was no possibility of such

a city arising in the North. The North was the poor and barren part of England. When it began to be developed by mechanical means, communications were beginning to be developed as well. The time for a great rival city in the North had passed.

The closest approach was that of Manchester. Manchester, while not admitting that she was the tail, was, during the heyday of the nineteenth century, ready to own, without many blushes, that she wagged the dog. "What Manchester thinks today," we used to be told, "England will think tomorrow." Of this, or so it has been suggested to me, there is a very simple explanation. In the age before 1918, when General Elections were spread over a number of days, Manchester used to poll first, and there the swing of the pendulum was first demonstrated.

There was, however, more in it than that. Through Manchester a great deal of the wealth of the Kingdom flowed. Lancashire may have been no wealthier than Yorkshire, but she was focused in one city, whereas in Yorkshire there were several. Politicians became remarkably sensitive to what was going on in Lancashire. It was not merely by the accident of exceptional personalities on the staff that the *Manchester Guardian* became the one newspaper published outside London that carried equal weight with the London papers. I could tell you many stories of the great days of the *Manchester Guardian.* They were told to me by my grandfather. He was man-

ager of the *Manchester Guardian* in the great days. I suspect that he was biased. Manchester people often were.

Apart from the pages of this majestic journal, the chief claim of Manchester to be a cultural center lay in the sphere of art. The Manchester Corporation, collectively, and a number of wealthy men, individually, patronized the painters of the Victorian Era in a bold and determined manner. The result is that Manchester owns a splendid collection of works by the Pre-Raphaelites. These works do not stand high in public favor at the moment But they seem to me to have fine wearing qualities, and I should be proud to be a citizen of the city that put down good money for Ford Madox Brown's "Work" and also commissioned him to paint the frescoes in her Town Hall. There is, further, in the entrance to that Town Hall, a piece of sculpture by Alfred Gilbert which was well worth whatever fraction of the rates it cost.

Later there was a literary and dramatic efflorescence in Manchester. Miss Horniman managed the Repertory Theater, where she produced plays by such indigenous dramatists as Stanley Houghton and Allan Monkhouse, besides giving invaluable opportunities to dramatists from the rest of the world. C. E Montagu wrote not only leaders in the *Manchester Guardian,* but also fine novels and short stories.

Today Manchester grows, in appearance, more and more metropolitan. Dwellers in the neigh-

boring towns, in Oldham and Bolton and Stockport, will tell you that long ago she ceased to be Manchester at all, that now she is only a London colony in Lancashire. These towns have been so long resisting Manchester's own pull that they have become rather tough about it. They know how independence and local character can be attacked and eaten away. But they, too, have been touched. It is a significant thing that Manchester was the first of the great Lancashire towns to give up describing her annual holidays as "the Wakes." There was a time when this word was used for local annual festivities in other parts of England. I have at any rate encountered traces of it as far south as Gloucestershire. Within living memory, however, it has been virtually confined to Lancashire. Each town, at a fixed time every year, has its Wakes week when the inhabitants go on holiday—generally to Blackpool. But not within living memory has this occasion been described as "the Wakes week" in Manchester—where nevertheless it is celebrated, just as always, under the name of "the Whitsun holidays." And now the other towns are beginning to stop speaking of the Wakes and to enjoy "holidays" instead. London has touched them. The uniformity of the Kingdom is beginning to creep over them. They are suffering from the first infection of a metropolitan refinement.

Elsewhere you will find the same thing. The other provincial cities produced no less talent than Manchester, but seemed unable to hold it even so

much Arnold Bennett came from the Potteries, but he did not go back. He returned to England after some years in France, but he did not return to Hanley-on-Trent. In later years Mr. Priestley has often told us that the heart of England is in the provinces—but he lives no nearer to England's heart than Bennett did.

It is a purely gravitational force that is at work. London is at once too near to the provincial cities, and too large, to allow them a perfectly independent existence. Only on the other side of the Border does one begin to be conscious of the pull growing weaker.

I take it that this is a thing which has been not without its advantages in our history. If the capital had been rather a distant objective for Shakespeare to travel to, if there had been a nearer, though lesser, center of culture which tempted him, he would have suffered for want of the rich and various background of Elizabethan London. It is impossible to believe that Goethe would not have benefited if Germany had possessed a real metropolis instead of the quasi-capitals to which his experience was confined.

The perfectly proportioned country would strike a mean between excessive predominance of the capital and excessive independence of the provinces. England has not struck that mean. Nor has any other country, though perhaps France comes nearer to it than most. The characteristic life of the provinces remains very strong in France

and even the facility of communications seems not to weaken it very much. But in England it began to weaken with the day on which first there were roads over which a mail coach could travel with reasonable safety One might say that Macadam knocked Manchester down before she could stand up

* * *

I write as a confessed Londoner, and it may seem that I write also with a complacent metropolitan superiority. That would be, I hope, a false impression, but it behooves me all the more to use a careful impartiality.

Let me begin, then, by saying frankly what there is to be said for London.

She is the most ancient city in the realm, built on the first possible crossing of our greatest river She has been the seat of government since before the Normans came. William's most brilliant maneuver was the march by which, immediately after Hastings, he made sure of London before doing anything else. The most damaging mistake committed by Charles I was his abandonment of London—and, if it was not a mistake, but something he could not avoid, then that shows only that his cause was lost before ever he took the field. London has Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's and Buckingham Palace and the Tower and the Bank of England.

But, most important of all, Greater London contains an aggregate of some eight million souls who, whatever their technical domiciliary status,

regard themselves primarily as Londoners. She is still by long odds the largest city in the world. New York treads hard on her heels in the matter of numbers, but she will have to grow much more before she approaches London in the matter of proportion to the population of the whole country. Melbourne and Sydney rival her in this respect, but do not come near to her in sheer bulk. London is unique. William Dunbar said it in the fifteenth century: "London, thou art of townes *A per se.*" It is as true now as it was then, though perhaps for different reasons. I do not know whether Dunbar would now repeat: "London, though art the flour of Cities all," or whether he would be prepared to stand by this ecstasy of adulation:

Strong be thy wallis that about thee standis;
  Wise be the people that within thee dwellis;
Fresh is thy ryver with his lusty strandis;
  Blith be thy chirches, wele sownyng be thy bellis;
  Rich be thy merchauntis in substaunce that excellis;
Fair be their wives, right lovesom, white and small;
  Clere be thy virgyns, lusty under kellis:
London, though art the flour of Cities all.

Thy famous Maire, by pryncely governaunce,
  With sword of justice thee ruleth prudently.
No Lord of Parys, Venyce, or Floraunce
  In dignitye or honour goeth to hym nigh.
  He is exampler, loode-ster, and guye,
Principall patrone and rose orygynalle,
  Above all Maires as maister most worthy:
London, though art the flour of Cities all.

But, whatever else has to be said, London is still "of townes *A per se*," and that is something which cannot be without effect on the country in which she is situated.

Her immense size is of particular importance just now when all cities are bursting their bounds and splashing over their surrounding countrysides at an amazing rate. She has not yet reached the seacoast with continuous houses But on a fine Saturday afternoon in summer there is very nearly a continuous line of cars between her center and the sea at Brighton and a liquid, said to resemble the sea, at Southend. There are many people who sleep every night in these places, but who never think of themselves as anything but Londoners.

To come nearer home, the village of Amersham was, within my recollection, really a village, including at least one inn with an entrance for coaches. It is still officially described as being twenty miles from London and it comes under the authority of a different county council But four out of five of its inhabitants go to London every morning, either themselves bodily or in spirit with their husbands, sons, and daughters, who will return thence after the day's work somewhere between seven and eight, and who once a week will bring back the money they have earned there. The same thing is true of Caterham and Chislehurst and Beckenham and scores more of suburbs too many to enumerate. As soon as we have motor roads comparable with those of Germany and

Italy, there will be a still wider dispersion. And the dispersion has already the oddest and most disconcerting results. Some years ago the London County Council "decanted" (I use the proper technical phrase) some of its overcrowded population into a rural area which was, naturally, outside its own boundaries, in the county of Essex. This influx of people needed all sorts of things, including hospitals, which in our rather idiotic way were to be provided by voluntary subscription. The subscription-giving folk in Essex were accordingly invited to subscribe, and, as is hardly surprising, some of them revolted. They wanted to know why they should be expected to put up money for the benefit of a lot of Londoners who had suddenly been dumped in their midst. The Lord-Lieutenant of the county took this view and expressed it in terms which no one could mistake. He was later compelled to withdraw by pressure from high quarters. Whether, after that, subscriptions came in is more than I can tell. But it is obvious that a dilemma had been created of which no proper solution has yet been found.

London is still, as she has been for many centuries, a magnificent spectacle, and Greater London becomes every day a more and more magnificent mess. There is an individual known as the Lord Mayor of London, but, on my honor, I could not tell you his name without looking it up.[1] On

[1] There is a new Lord Mayor of London every year, and I remember the names of two men who have held that office during my lifetime I remember one of them because he was a friend of the family and the other because he was a good cricketer

the 9th of November he figured in a procession which might have caused me a good deal of inconvenience if I had been in Fleet Street at the time. I doubt whether it could have given me any pleasure in compensation for that inconvenience, because it is normally a tawdry, empty business. It is hard to say how it could be anything else. The Lord Mayor of London no longer represents any important reality in the London which the contemporary inhabitants of it know by that name. If he did, Mr. Montague Norman would have been Lord Mayor long before this, and perhaps, before him or after him, a Rothschild or a Baring or two. (Or perhaps Mr. Norman would have decided to go on being Lord Mayor year after year.) It was men of this order of importance who gave the Lord Mayoralty of London the prestige which it still enjoys. But if Mr. Norman were to drive in procession as Lord Mayor (which would be great fun, even if he called himself Professor Skinner for the occasion) it would not mean very much for the inhabitants of Greater London. There is neither ceremonial nor administrative contact between the Lord Mayor of London and the dweller in Paddington, who is, none the less, reckoned as a Londoner.

The suggestion was once made that the Lord Mayor's Show should be held in the Cromwell Road, where it could walk up and down all day long, if the Corporation so desired, without getting much in anyone's way. There is this to be said, that the crowds thus attracted would have little less connection with the City of London rep-

resented by the Lord Mayor than the crowds which assembled to see the show on the last 9th of November.

The central fact is that the Lord Mayor of London is nobody west of Temple Bar and a person of no great functional importance east of it. The main effect of his existence is to distract attention from the man who ought to occupy his position, the Chairman of the London County Council, whose name, also, I fear I cannot remember. Other great municipalities have their visible leaders, men who combine a symbolical position with an administrative duty. Without reference to authority I can tell you that, at the moment of writing, the Lord Mayor of Manchester is Alderman Toole and that the Lord Provost of Glasgow is Sir John Stewart.

London pays for her ancient history, her size and her predominance, in having no Lord Mayor of her own. There may be something in being a capital, but it seems to mean missing something that is got by being a provincial city. London is, in fact, a capital but not a city. Probably successive governments have worked toward this position for so long that it has ceased to be conscious policy and has become purely a habit. London is in many important matters the concern of the central administration, not of her own citizens.[1] As a result, she is an amorphous mess. But still she

[1] Were it not so we should not have had so many years of fatuous argument over Waterloo Bridge Those who were schoolboys when the bridge first showed signs of collapse are now fathers Liverpool or Newcastle would have been able to settle the matter in a fifth of the time.

is a mess with an enormous gravitational power as regards the rest of the Kingdom—a power not to be forgotten in any attempt to make a picture of the state of England.

* * *

But, in spite of London's gravitational pull, there *is* still independent life in the provinces One might almost say that it is possible to trace, at any rate in palimpsest, the boundaries of the Heptarchy. Now I am no unqualified admirer of nationalism in politics and I do *not* wish to see the boundaries of the Heptarchy redrawn in firmer lines The self-determination of small nationalities has always seemed to me at best a sometimes necessary evil and never a good to be pursued for its own sake. But the preservation of the individualities of wide regions within a larger framework *is* a good to be pursued for its own sake. If Yorkshire were to rise in order to throw off the tyrannical English yoke, I should unhappily consent to the mowing-down by machine-guns of mobs in Bradford and Leeds. I should think that these were asses who were seeking to undo the work of centuries of political progress, and that on the whole they were better dead. But when a Yorkshireman tells me with the bluntness known only in his county (Lancashire may sometimes win cricket matches, but she is not in the same street when it comes to bluntness of speech) that my notion of a Yorkshire pudding is an offense—when I hear this from a Yorkshire-

man, I may argue the point with him, but my spirit rises up in approval On this point we may presumably accept Mr. Priestley as an overriding authority, and Mr. Priestley's Jess Oakroyd delivers to his landlady as follows

> 'To begin wi',' I says, 'a Yorkshire pudding is eaten by itsen and not mixed up wi' meat and potatoes, all in a mush. And it comes straight out o' t'ooven,' I says, 'straight on to t'plate No waiting,' I says, 'or you'll spoil it. If you don't put it straight on to t'plate you might as well go and sole your boots with it. And another thing,' I says, 'you've got to have your oven hot, I do know that. Then if you've mixed right and your oven's hot, pudding'll come out as light as a feather, crisp and brarn, just a top and a bottom, you might say, wi' none o' this custardy stuff in t'middle. Nah d'you see, Missis?' I says.

It would be of no avail for me to say to Mr. Oakroyd that, when it is all properly done, I like the custardy stuff in the middle, and that we have developed our own confection out of something that began in his part of the country. As a matter of fact Yorkshire pudding in the South has as much connection with Yorkshire as Charlotte Russe with Russia. It can be very good in the South all the same.

What does matter is that a man should stand up for his own local dishes and for all his own local ways of doing things. Mr. Oakroyd may be intolerant in his views of Yorkshire pudding, but something much worse lies along the way of ex-

cessive tolerance. What, for example, of accents? Local accents are beginning to disappear. Scottish accents survive and are admired. The distinctive accents of the great provinces of England are, by a majority, regarded as vulgar. The teacher in the elementary schools began long ago what the B.B.C. is now finishing off with mechanical deadliness We all like local accents in other people, but none of us want to speak them ourselves I lament that my taxi driver in Manchester does not betray a Lancashire tang, but there is not, if I can help it, any Cockney in what I say to him. So they disappear, faster and faster as time goes on.

But if England is to go on as England, she must not allow all her parts to be absorbed in the amorphous mass called London, the mass which for all its history has not life enough to insist on a Lord Mayor of its own.

Yorkshire pudding and the Lancashire accent may seem to be unimportant items in the account of the national well-being. But they do mean something because they are symbols of local pride. Such pride does exist. It is obvious in the great municipalities, which compete with one another to have the finest fire brigades and the finest police stations and the finest public libraries in the Kingdom No Londoner who talks to persons interested in municipal affairs in the provinces can fail to be impressed by this fact. Local pride persists even though it is built on an illogical and confused foundation. Our system of local government is, when one looks into it, a wild improvisa-

tion. The tangle of county councils and borough councils and county boroughs and urban and rural district councils appears to the impartial eye as a jungle that ought to exist only on the banks of the Amazon. We once had a very fine system of local government—for those times. But times changed and the system fell into decay, with no one worrying very much until the growth of the population made it apparent that we must have a new system altogether. We have made one up on the spur of the moment and we have added to it and altered it and qualified it until it looks like nothing so much as the house described by Charles Kingsley in the quotation on page 8 of this book From today's newspaper I take this extract which is as illuminating as it is discouraging:

> I pay rates to a borough just outside London which supplies me with electricity. I pay a South-east London company for my gas My postal area is a Southwest number. My police are Metropolitan. My fire engine is in a London borough. My telephone is a London one. My trams and buses are London Transport. My water comes from an artesian well—authority unknown.
>
> I pay for gas once a month, for electricity and telephone once a quarter and rates once in six months.

This refers to London, but it applies in general to the whole of England Local government came to England at a time when the old differences between region and region seemed to have

been obliterated and no longer of any importance. The new lines were drawn in an arbitrary manner during a period of flux. The old lines are beginning to show again. I believe there are two forces at work in England. One of them is the gravitational pull of the overgrown, amorphous and still majestic mass (or mess) that is London, the other is the resistance of the provinces to the influence of London. This resistance is a valuable thing, but it can be given the strength it needs only by being reorganized. The word "region" is the one on which we need to concentrate. It has just now received a heavy defeat. Sir Kingsley Wood, going to Tyneside in the capacity of a Minister of the Crown, has announced that the scheme for the development of Tyneside as a "region," which was recommended by the majority report of a Royal Commission, is not practicable, and that a more limited scheme must take its place. I think this more than a great pity. If the original scheme had been applied, others might have taken shape. We might even have introduced order into the industrial complex of South Lancashire, though I am sure that Oldham would have entered the fold bleating her protests to the last

There, however, we are The Local Government Acts have created interests of which it is difficult to get rid. The Urban District Councilor does not want his Urban District to be absorbed in a larger unit in which his importance may be decreased. There is, again, the question

of employment. One reason for the establishment of larger units is that it would save so much work. In the more crowded and more closely contiguous areas of the North, something like a third of the time of all municipal officials is consumed in making arrangements with their neighbors. Once you have dispensed with the necessity for making these arrangements, you have dispensed with the necessity for a good many of the officials.

I am very sorry for the Urban (and even the Rural) District Councilors whose importance will have to be diminished. I am even sorrier for the officials who will necessarily be displaced. But it will have to be done all the same—if England is to go on being England. The "regions," that is to say, a modern and less quarrelsome version of the old Heptarchy, must assert themselves unless the whole land is to become a dull and colorless version of London. I have put my argument in terms of Yorkshire pudding, which will serve as a symbol I trust that the reader will realize that there is more in it than that. The different parts of our country have different things to contribute The process of shaking them around in a bowl has gone on long enough. So long as they do not want to kill one another as they did in the days of Egbert of Wessex and Offa of Mercia, the more they differ the better it will be. What but good can come out of a difference between Birmingham and Sheffield over the best type of fire engine?

IX

Neighbors, Foreigners, and Cousins

At last, under this heading, I am able to draw attention to a fact which is sufficiently important, but which is very often forgotten. The eminent writers who have preceded me in this series of books have had tasks very different from mine. Lord Dunsany writes about a country with a population of some four millions. Mr. Rhys Davies has under two and a half millions to deal with in Wales, and Mr. Macdonell about five millions in Scotland. But the population of England exceeds thirty-five millions.

I am not trying to argue that their tasks have, for this reason, been easier than mine. My point is that this is a fact which every school-child knows, but which most grown-ups forget. The patient and good-humored English hardly ever remember it at all. They take it as natural that the Irish, the Welsh and the Scots should comport themselves as though all four nations shared the British Isles on equal terms.

The Irish Free State is, of course, a special case. But it is in reality special only in terms of politics, of Cabinets and Parliaments. In things that matter more, few people, whether in England or in Ireland, feel that Ireland is any less a part of

the United Kingdom than she ever was. She retains, and shows no anxiety to abjure, one remarkable privilege attaching to membership of the British Commonwealth of Nations Her citizens can come here without let or hindrance, can settle here, engage in business, and can even commit criminal actions here without being liable to deportation at the end of their jail sentences.[1] Coming and going between the two countries has not been sensibly diminished by the Treaty or by any subsequent developments. In fact the Treaty was no more than an overdue recognition of the fact that Ireland had been a special case for a long time, that the wrong reasons had been taken for her incorporation in the Union, although the time was then ripe for it, and that it was too late to go back and begin all over again on more reasonable lines.

So much for Ireland, for the moment at any rate. But it will perhaps be more profitable to consider the relations between England and Scotland. Here there is not, and has not been for generations, any political strain worth taking seriously into account. There is, to be sure, a Scottish Nationalist Movement, but its fire seems always to languish for want of the fuel of a substantial grievance and of the bellows of opposition from the foreign tyrant.

England has no idea of any such opposition. Feeling here did run very high over Rome Rule

[1] They share this privilege with, among others, the inhabitants of the island of Cyprus.

for Ireland, but I cannot imagine it ever stirring over Home Rule for Scotland, provided always that the Scots did not want more than, say, forty per cent the better of the deal The huge English majority in the House of Commons would probably concede easier terms than that, only to be rid of the earnest and interminable dreariness of debates on purely Scottish affairs. As I have said on an earlier page, a Scottish Presbyterian, representing a Scottish constituency, not only recorded a vote against the revision of the English Prayer Book, but also made a very effective speech against it. No English member would have the least desire thus to interfere in the private concerns of the other kingdom. I have sometimes pondered on this extraordinary behavior of Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell, but have never heard, or been able to imagine, any satisfactory explanation of it. It does, however, suggest an excellent English reason for supporting the cause of Scottish Nationalism.

Unhappily, few arguments as good ever come from the other side of the Border, though others do exist. I have already mentioned an obvious tendency to remold our system of local government in larger units with greater powers, obliterating counties and county boroughs to make way for "regions." I see no reason why Scotland, having a population not so very far short of that administered by the London County Council, should not become such a "region."

As for the other things which the Scottish Na-

tionalists demand, we might, and probably should, be in a humoring mood. They want to have back the Stone of Destiny which stands under King Edward's Chair on which our Kings are crowned. Well—why not? "Mons Meg," that celebrated piece of ordnance, which is now the boast and joy of Edinburgh Castle, was kept for a long time in the Tower of London, but George IV returned it, without any fuss or bother, to the country where it was first used[1] It is quite possible that Edward VIII, had he remained long enough on the throne, might have done the same with the Liana Fail. And, if this were made a condition of Scotland's accepting Home Rule—on terms not too ruinously unfair to England—there would be a large majority for it on this side of the Border. We have, after all, at least as good a Coronation Stone of our own in the High Street of Kingston-on-Thames. My own desire would be to give the Scots their Liana Fail without any bargaining at all and to put our own stone in its proper place. I do not know what the Scots would do with the Liana Fail, but that is their business. I suppose they would put it somewhere in Edinburgh Castle and charge the visitor yet another sixpence to look at it.

* * *

In all I have written so far I have deliberately given rein to my own prejudices with the purpose

[1] The evidence seems to be strongly against its having been made in Scotland

of making a rough, very rough, picture of the average Englishman's attitude toward his neighbors in the British Isles. But I must in fairness remind the reader that here I cannot be quite an average Englishman. Indeed a descendant of the Huguenot refugees or of one of Dutch William's followers would qualify better for the part. He would not be so often reminded of the past of his family.

I, however, was brought up on the fringes of what I may call London Scottishness. My father took small interest in such matters He spent his youth in the London of the seventies and eighties, and he was a Londoner if ever there was one. As a young man he spent his Saturdays in playing cricket—he was, though short of stature, a fast right-hand bowler and never quite understood how he could have begotten a slow left-hander—or else, in the manner of Jerome K. Jerome, up the river.

But he was red-haired and freckled and his friends nicknamed him "Mac." The friends I first observed when I began to listen to the grown-ups talking would sometimes remark on the fact that he offered them whisky in the evenings instead of brandy You might have thought it was as exotic as vodka. And it was generally assumed that he knew all about golf, which was then still a game almost as exotic as pelota. And I heard people asking my father what he was going to do on Burns Night.

Some of my cousins had Scottish names and one

or two of them wore kilts.[1] When I was older, my first dances were those where, at intervals, a few experts danced eightsome reels, in the middle of an otherwise empty floor, to the sound of the pipes. And, a little later, there were members of my family who could not understand why, when it came to a matter of enlisting, I preferred the Artists' Rifles to that famous kilted, pipe-playing regiment, the London Scottish.

(I like the pipes myself. they make me go hot and cold all over, however badly they are played But then that is true of all Londoners. How otherwise could a living be earned by the gentlemen of Semitic appearance who play these extraordinary instruments in the streets and squares of Kensington?)

Another influence in my early life was Sir Harry Lauder. All the members of my family were among his earliest and most fanatical admirers I too admired him, but it was a reluctant admiration—a sincere tribute to his genius, since in the applause of those around me I was always irked by the self-consciousness of the expatriate Scot. The English wives of the technically Scottish menfolk were perhaps the worst of them all.

What I am trying to claim is that circumstances have made me exceptionally sensitive to the attitude of the English toward the Scottish nation. I am, I continue to maintain, an Englishman.

[1] Possibly it should be "the kilt" or "the kilts," but really I cannot be bothered Anyway, I should think that the tartan used would have been an offense to any genuine Scot

Three-quarters of my blood is English, I was born here, educated here, and never crossed the Border until my thirty-eighth year. But the average Englishman is not thus sensitive: he hardly ever troubles to analyze his feelings at all. Deep in his mind lies the thought that there are nearly forty millions of him and only about five million Scots. He would say, if he were forced to be so explicit, that England could get on much better without Scotland than Scotland without England. But it does sometimes, in a vague way, annoy him that the Scots should be so ignorant of this fact. He does sometimes, rather lazily, resent the assumption of this handful of neighbors that they are of exceptional value to the community. On the whole, however, he likes them well enough to give way to them in many things.

One example of this indulgence is worth touching on. You will perhaps have noticed that throughout these pages I have been careful to use the words "Scottish," "Scots" and "Scot," never the words "Scotch" or "Scotchman." That is because of my training as a journalist. No English newspaper will ever, save by inadvertence, speak of a Scot as a Scotchman or of anything, except whisky, as Scotch, and that is because if it does, it will have an inordinate deal of trouble with letters from offended Scottish readers.

Yet there is ample justification for the word "Scotch." What I take leave to call the English language, as spoken by educated people, does differ in material and definite particulars between

one side of the Border and the other. We do not reprove our neighbors because they say "depute" where we say "deputy."[1] We do not think of it as an article of good manners to say that "the man was a Français." The plain answer to this question is that we have been bullied into altering our language by a people which is few in numbers and importance in proportion to its self-assertiveness. We content ourselves with laughing at the Scotch (I mean to be firm on this point for at least once in my life) in a good-humored and negligent way, in which they complacently and profitably abet us.

Certain acrid tones, as of ill-temper, have crept into the last two or three pages. I leave them there because they have their proper place in a complete presentation of the whole matter. But the English have, in general, no acrid feeling toward the Scotch. It is different with the Welsh and the Irish. I have often seen advertisements for employees in English papers (generally for barmen or barmaids) ending with the words: "No Irish or Welsh need apply" Who has ever seen the words: "No Scotch need apply"? The Scotch have entered into partnership with us, sometimes almost too enthusiastically They have agreed to abide by the same rules and we know where we are with them. They have accepted the principle

[1] As another example—a Scot will write, quite correctly: "I am presently in London," meaning that he is in London at the moment of writing His English correspondent would do wrong to reply, when the letter has been forwarded to him "But I am presently in Pitlochrie"

of amicable partnership, of making the best of the land, which has always been the basis of English life.

But with the Welsh and the Irish we do not know where we are. A little while ago some Welshmen set fire to a Government aerodrome in Wales. Their object was to call attention to the wrongs of their country. On my heart and honor, I do not know what those wrongs can be. I am not conscious of, even vicariously, oppressing any Welshman. I do remember that they wanted Disestablishment and that they eventually had it. And I do remember that one of the aerodrome-burning heroes, on his release from jail, said something about making Wales "a Christian country." That suggests to me that there are a number of Welshmen who ardently want self-government so that they can discipline, dragoon and oppress other Welshmen And I remember again a performance in a London theater of a play called *Taffy,* by my friend Mr. Caradoc Evans. It represented several Welsh characters as wicked and absurd to the point of buffoonery under both counts. It made me think, *mutanda* being very much *mutata,* of Mr. Somerset Maugham's play *Our Betters.* But no one, English, French, or American, ever tried to break up a performance of that generously provocative little masterpiece. The performance of *Taffy* was suspended by people in the pit, who created an organized uproar. They were, I was told, Welsh milkmen living in London, who regarded the play as a libel on their country.

Probably it was: it was too fantastically condemnatory to carry conviction to me. It was simply a piece of outrageous fun. But I sought out the manager of the theater and told him that, if there were any question of socking Welsh milkmen on the jaw, I should like to be invited to take part. It was not that I wanted, in my arrogant English way, to oppress the Welsh. I was infuriated by seeing a witty extravaganza interrupted by this nonsense. Then, when it became evident that there would be no punitive expedition into the pit, I returned to my seat and saw my friend, the author, standing in the wings and gazing upon the turmoil with a grin of obvious delight. At that moment I should have been quite willing to give Mr Caradoc Evans the sock on the jaw I had been preparing for one of the milkmen It seemed to me that he and they were conspiring to let their local and irrational quarrels interfere with my evening's entertainment, and I was very angry about it.

Somewhere in that episode, if you dig deep enough, you can find the essence of the Englishman's attitude toward his neighbors in these islands. There are thirty-five millions of him and they do not add up to a third of that. He has learned ways of composing not only a score of local differences, but also a dozen different strains in his own blood. What infuriates him beyond endurance in his neighbors is their tendency to quarrel with one another. Because he is, in virtue of numbers, the senior partner, they always

seek to involve him in their quarrels. Because tolerance is his own principle of life and he has found that it works very well, he barges happily in, believing he can show them how to be peaceful together. He ends with a desire to administer a sock on the jaw to everyone in sight. This is the reason why what look like atrocities are so often followed by what looks like indifference. After Glencoe and the terrible events of the '45 comes the peaceful penetration of the Scots into English public life After "the troubles" in Ireland, after the beastly régime of the Black and Tans, comes our present attitude of benevolent and quizzical interest in the results of General Elections in the Free State. Ask the next ten Englishmen you meet what majority Mr de Valera has in the Dail, and it is long odds that not one of them will get within five of it. They have their own way over there now and are at liberty to fight out their own quarrels in their own way. And (so says the typical Englishman) good shuttance to them! We have rarely had serious difficulties with any of our neighbors except when we have been roped in by one of their parties to fight another. That is true even of Scotland. Edward I may have thought he was being clever when he intervened in Scottish affairs and set a king on the throne there. But generations of Englishmen at school, accepting with outward docility the opinion of the history books on this point, have privately formed the opinion that Edward I would have been much cleverer if he had left the

whole thing alone We have never had anything but trouble from our interference in the affairs of our neighbors, and trouble is the last thing that the Englishman wants.

* * *

The Welsh, the Irish and, in a very much lesser degree, the Scots are foreigners whom the processes of history have placed in a sometimes embarrassing proximity to us. The other foreigners embarrass us less. We are supposed to hold them in a settled contempt, but that is not quite true. It is nearer the truth, I think, to say that we are never fully convinced of their objective reality.

Let me record here two remarks made to me by English people. One of them came from a very distinguished person, a man of letters who has been knighted for his services to the language and other amenities of his country. He said: "If my daughter were to marry a foreigner, I should feel very much as though she had married a monkey" The other of these commentators was a pleasant middle-aged Englishwoman to whom I expressed my feelings when I had spent a couple of hours trying to telephone from one Italian town to another about fifteen miles away. (This was in pre-Fascist days.) She said: "Yes, I know . . . but I never can help thinking how clever it is of foreigners to have things like telephones at all"

I have now recorded these remarks. For years they have haunted me, making me feel that some-

where in them, if only it could be extracted, lies that clue to the English which has so long baffled all the other races of the world. But I cannot satisfy myself that I have ever extracted it. They grin at me like a couple of Sphinxes and all that I am sure of is that the obvious interpretations of them are incorrect.

A relatively recent historical accident does account to some extent for our attitude toward other countries. In the latter years of the eighteenth century we initiated the Industrial Revolution. We had a happy juxtaposition of coal and iron, and a financial system which provided capital in abundance for their working. Then, for more than twenty years while the armies of France were marching to and fro over the face of Europe, we were able to proceed with our development in peace. In 1814 we were almost incomparably the wealthiest nation in the world, and, since we had a small but admirable army and a large and equally admirable fleet to enforce our will, we enjoyed a primacy of a sort which the Western world had not known for many centuries. We alone had never been obliged to give way to Napoleon, and that gave us a marvelous prestige not only in other eyes but equally in our own.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, our belief in our prestige received some severe knocks, but it was still strong in 1914. Normally, in a war, someone has to be beaten. But it is doubtful whether, during the four years of the War, one Englishman in ten thousand allowed himself seri-

ously to imagine what the consequences of being beaten would be like. It was simply the sort of thing that does not happen to the English. In the darkness of 1917, there were some who, like Lord Lansdowne, began to feel that perhaps we ought to extricate ourselves before the beating came. But there were not many even of these, and those who went further were only a handful of eccentrics

The Englishman's belief in his eventual invincibility still existed in 1914, though there were reasons why it should not have existed. It represents a tenable view of the situation to say that the Germans went to disaster because they gambled on their own belief that it had been finally weakened. It may not be too much to say that a recollection of that fatal gamble is the chief factor in the preservation of the world's peace today.

But it might be possible to say that the last sentence I have written is an illustration of the offensively moderate pride of the Englishman, the sort of thing which makes other nations dislike him. I do not deny that he has a very vexing form of self-confidence, and I am equally little concerned to assert that he derives it from a single historical accident. It goes back further than the outcome of the Napoleonic Wars, further even than the triumphs of the Elizabethans. It really does seem to be something essential in the national character. It has an unpleasant aspect, but there is also something very good in it. When one digs down very deep, one reaches the belief that any-

one in the world may become an Englishman if only he makes a genuine effort. The trouble about foreigners is not so much that they are of foreign blood as that they will insist on living in foreign countries and talking foreign languages If they will have the good sense to come here, they can, after a short probationary period, say two or three generations, be qualified for all the privileges enjoyed by natives. My friend, who would as soon have seen his daughter married to a monkey as to a foreigner, would have raised no objection to an alliance with a descendant of Norman barons or of the Huguenot exiles or of the Bentincks or even of the refugees of 1848. When a family has adjusted itself to the local tone and learnt those lessons which cannot be taught save by experience, it is as English as the next, and it would be very bad-mannered to suggest that it is not.

In some ways England is more like a club than a country. The new member may be presumed to have some sense or else he would not have put up for election at this particular club. At the same time he must not suppose that, just because of that, we shall immediately accept him on a footing of equality. He must first learn the ways of the other members, and that is a business about which he must go very discreetly. He is a newcomer and he must show proper respect to those who were here before him He must not trouble them overmuch with questions: they do not really mind whether he settles down among them or not. He must watch what they do and school himself

to do the same. After he has been doing that for some time, and if he has done it successfully, he will find a sudden change in the treatment he receives from his fellow members. Now he is one of them: the foreign body has been assimilated.

In one of his early books Mr. Alec Waugh has an extraordinarily amusing and illuminating description of this process as he observed it in a German prison camp for British officers. The newcomer was a "new boy." He had still to learn the ways of the place, and, until he had done so, must regard himself as an inferior. You may see a fine working model of the position of England among the nations every year when clubs close for cleaning and their members are boarded out in other clubs. My club is, of course, a very good one and I cannot quite understand why anyone should want to belong to another. Whence come the owners of these strange faces who seem not to understand any of our habits, which are, of course, habits founded on experience and good sense? Ah, yes, one of the Potwallopers, I suppose. Look, there is one of them lighting a cigaret in the end of the coffee room where smoking is not allowed. It is the head waiter who has to tell him that it is not allowed. On these occasions the club servants occupy a sort of Olympian place. They look down, as the gods may do, on the difficulties arising from divergent national customs. There are all sorts of difficulties during the first week, and hosts and guests regard one another with uneasy dislike, though the guests are

humbler in their demeanor. But often, before the visit is finished, the foundations of new friendships have been laid, and equally often a host diffidently wonders whether his name could be put up for the guest's club, and the other way round.

The unconscious essential of the Englishman's attitude to all the other peoples of the earth is that of the club member. Anyone who wishes can become an Englishman. He has only to wish it with a sufficient devotion. He must watch what we do and do the same. One lifetime, to be sure, is not usually enough: it may take two or three generations. But once the process has been accomplished it would be extremely bad manners to call attention to the fact that it ever needed to be accomplished.

That is why there is no real Jewish problem in England, except in districts where the Jew is still a raw and undigested element. In the East End of London, the Gentile population sometimes regards the Jewish immigrant as a menace. When the first Jewish family moves into the local Magnolia Street, the other inhabitants see what can be done by breaking their windows as soon as possible. Unless this is done, the first family will not be the last. But such incidents occur less and less frequently. If the Jew will only behave like an Englishman, for our purposes he *is* an Englishman. If there ever is a Jewish problem here, it will be because he has forgotten the code of the club and displayed allegiance to some other code which is not ours.

This might happen, though I hope it will not. Two or three years ago I saw a film with some such title as *Germany Marches On*. It was a film that had been devised with great cleverness as an attack on the Nazi régime. The menace presented by that militant and efficient organization was very tellingly shown. But, what rarely happens in English cinemas, there were great rounds of handclapping at all the most telling points. Soon I saw many members of the audience besides myself looking round to see whence this strange applause proceeded. It came from obvious and unmistakable Yids. I use the offensive word to suggest the feeling which ran through all of us who were not Jews. It was not at that moment an angry feeling, it was rather amused and puzzled. We who experienced it were by no means partizans of the Nazis, far from wishing to indulge in pogroms. But in the expressions of many people around me I could see the dawning of the idea that there might be something to be said for Herr Hitler after all. If that idea ever develops, it will be the fault of the Jews—and because a deep-seated racial passion has been strong enough to make them break the rules of the club. I have just been reading Mr. Douglas Jerrold's autobiography, which contains this statement about Sir Oswald Mosley: "He preaches in the East End not because he dislikes Jews, but because Jews dislike him" In this there is a profound truth —and the moral of it that the Jews are fools to allow themselves to be drawn. There will never

be any effective anti-Semitic movement in England unless they actively cooperate in its creation But they must identify themselves with us, and they must not try to drag us into their quarrels elsewhere.

I once met a Jew who was, I believe, a British citizen, and who was certainly practising here as a medical specialist He said that he was disappointed in the English because they did not protest against the treatment of the Jews in Germany. I gave him as good a version as I could remember of Sidney Smith on England's duty toward the oppressed in other countries, and added, "I hear that there have been troubles in Armenia. Undoubtedly there are people in Russia who are having the hell of a bad time. Friends of mine have suffered excruciating injustices during revolutions in South America. Negroes are often lynched in the United States. We can't do everything at once. What are your reasons for thinking that we should begin with the Jews in Germany?" He answered: "I have never thought of it in that way." And in so answering, he injected into my mind a minute dose of the unpleasant poison of anti-Semitism—an infection of which, in the very writing of these lines, I am trying to rid myself. My instinctive reaction was that he *should* have thought of it in that way. Fortunately, for every Jew who behaves in this way there are two who faithfully observe the code of the club which they have chosen to join.

I have wandered, though not so far as it may

seem, from the foreigners who do not want to join our club. When we come into contact with them, we betray how much of the Podsnap there still is in us. "Our English adverbs," said Mr. Podsnap to his French guest, "do not terminate in Mong and we pronounce the 'ch' as though there were a 't' before it. We say Ritch." But Mr. Podsnap is a portrait in only two dimensions. Had he been conceived in three, we should have heard him saying, also, that the only decent omelette he ever had in his life was at a little café in Chalons-sur-Saône, and lamenting that he could get no English cook to give him anything comparable with it. With our severe and (to the foreigner) unostentatious belief in our own virtues, we combine an immense admiration of the things that he can do and that we cannot. Most often these things are connected with cooking, but sometimes also with painting and music. But we do not mention them in disinterested tribute to the foreigner. We do not say: "We have our Parliamentary institutions and the traditions of Nelson: let us then take off our hats to his omelette or his *ravioli*." We say, and in rather an aggrieved voice: "Why cannot we have the omelette and *ravioli* too?" And sometimes we get near the point of saying: "Why cannot we have the discipline of Fascism as well as the go-as-you-please freedom of our own democracy?"

What all this means is that we should like them to join our club, bringing with them what we lack, and, for the rest, accepting our code. They would

be welcome. After a couple of generations, no one would know that there had ever been any difference. It is not an impracticable suggestion, if only they would agree to give it a fair trial. The main difficulty is that the assimilative process which has been so successful in England might not go as well in a different climate, and we cannot extend the borders of our country. Our experiment of mingling here has produced results which we think so good that we should like everybody else to join in. If they cannot, it is a great pity But we need not spend all our time thinking about people who can never share the advantages of English soil. And when we stop thinking about them more than we must, they recede into a sort of background of shadows. That is why the English have never been quite convinced of the objective reality of foreigners.

* * *

It is much harder to define the place held in the English mind by those whom I should like to be allowed to describe as "cousins"—by which I mean the Americans and the inhabitants of the Dominions. Technically, of course, all Americans are foreigners, and many of them, if we think in terms of national origins, in a more than technical sense. The climate, institutions, and customs of the United States are very different from ours and we are not oblivious of the difference. It often calls from us exclamations of delighted, but not surprised, interest. At the same time we do

not, and never shall, think of them as foreigners, even though a man with a Dutch name is President of the Union and a man with an Italian name is Mayor of New York.

How far we are wise in entertaining this attitude, to what misunderstandings it might not lead in the future, is more than I can say—more, fortunately, than I am called on to say here. But it is deeply planted in the mind of the Englishman. His view of the historical relations between the two countries would be something like this. He himself was not responsible for the oppression of the American Colonies under George III It happened a long time ago and his motto is always to let bygones be bygones. If, however, anyone is anxious to discuss the matter at this late date, he is quite prepared to admit not only that there were faults on both sides, but even that most of them were on the side of the Hanoverian King and his advisers. If he, the Englishman who is talking, had been alive at that time he would very strongly have supported the cause of the Colonies. (And quite possibly he would, since many Englishmen did.) He does, moreover, think that, the merits of the quarrel being what they were, it was a good thing that we lost the war. More even than that, this is the substance of what he has been taught at school. There is one inviolable rule for the writers of school histories. It would be obviously useless to pretend that we have never had the worst of a war. But that has happened only when we have fought in an unjust cause.

The War of American Independence stands with the time when we were driven out of France after the death of Henry V. Washington and Joan of Arc now receive as much honor from us as in their own countries. Not only are we without rancor toward them, we are sincerely glad that they beat us. And, I repeat, this is the view of history that is taught in our schools.

The teaching in American schools is, I believe, different, or was until quite recently. There is a residuum of feeling against the foreign tyrant which we usually forget, but which still must be taken seriously. Big Bill Thompson, who appealed to the citizens of Chicago to elect him as their Mayor, so that he might be in a position to bust King George on the snoot, was a caricature, but he caricatured something that did exist. The Englishman says, in all honesty, "*I* never oppressed you." He must not forget that there are Americans who answer, with honesty no less than his: "But wouldn't you love to oppress us now, if only you had the chance?" He must not forget, either, that this suspicion does not arise only from memories of the War of Independence. It was fed and fostered by those emigrants, both English and Irish, who during the nineteenth century escaped to the United States from what they considered to be a tyrannous social system.

Nothing is further from the mind of any Englishman than to oppress any American. We do think, however, that it was a pity that the necessity for the War of Independence should have

arisen. We should like the Americans to enter into a closer relationship with us than that of honorary members of the club to which we have elected them. The possibility of reunion is rarely discussed here. It is generally considered too impracticable to be worth wasting words on, and I suppose that is right. But I believe that nine Englishmen out of ten would give a favorable answer to any proposal that seemed to have a chance of success. We think that the separation was a regrettable mistake. In ordinary intercourse we attempt to behave toward Americans as though it had never happened.

Is this merely a sort of complacent folly on our part? It is clearly quite absurd for us to argue that America must still be really English at heart. In the area now covered by the United States there were large alien populations before the separation occurred—the Dutch in New York, and the French in Louisiana, and the Spanish in California. There have been alien accretions since, in staggering numbers. But we know, or think we know, all about that. If all the miscellaneous hordes that have landed here could melt together into Englishmen, surely it must be possible for the same thing to happen in America. And there is, after all, the language.

It is the matter of language that principally influences us when we think about the variously descended inhabitants of the United States. Sometimes we accuse them of committing outrages on our common tongue, but the accusation is always

rather half-hearted They invent new locutions, which we often accept with gratitude. They produce words which at first seem startlingly new, but are sometimes found to have had their origin here. Thus the word "racket," for example, has been used in its American sense in Dorset since time immemorial. There are differences of accent, but none greater than those which exist between London and Durham The languages of foreign immigrants have had a remarkably small effect on the development of English in America "Dumb" in the sense of "stupid" is patently from the German *dumm,* and "fresh" in the sense of "cheeky" from the German *frech,* but there is little else. Mr. H. L. Mencken wrote an enormous volume to prove that the two languages are rapidly diverging in material particulars, but I think that he failed.[1] Since then talkies, gramophones, and radios have made it certain that there will be no important divergence.

The language is, I repeat, of capital importance in the English mind. The emergence of our common tongue after the Black Death was what has made us what we are. The existence of a common tongue has made it possible for us to live on relatively peaceful terms with our neighbors in these islands. The Welsh puzzle and irritate us by maintaining a genuine bilingualism. The Irish exacerbated the quarrel when some of them

[1] He seems to have suffered from joyous leg-pullers in England who sent him all sorts of grotesque information for his grateful acceptance.

called themselves Sinn Feiners and made the speaking of Erse an article of their creed. If the Scottish Nationalists were to do the same with Gaelic, we might find ourselves back in the days of that early exemplar of the Black and Tans—Butcher Cumberland of Culloden. If our three neighbors (and perhaps the Cornish should be added) had persisted throughout history in speaking none but languages of their own, we might very well have exterminated them long ago out of sheer vexation.

Deep in his heart the Englishman feels that anyone to whom he can talk freely in English must understand and therefore eventually accept the English point of view. There is hope of these people and therefore it would be silly, as well as unmannerly, to quarrel with them We cannot, in truth, imagine ourselves at war with the United States [1] In this fact lies the whole secret of Anglo-American friendship and that faint, almost invisible spark of hope of a closer relationship. There are unquestionably people in the United States who feel the same. How many of them there are I do not know. But there is one aspect of the present relationship between the two countries which is unique in the modern world—not an

[1] The War of 1812 was really a belated flame from the embers of the War of Independence Few Englishmen are, in any strict sense, conscious that it ever happened Most believe that the duel of the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon* belongs to the other affair Those who know better than that are more ashamed of the day when we burned Washington than of the day when we were nastily defeated by Andrew Jackson

aspect which has to be adroitly demonstrated on paper, but something which anyone can go and see for himself. I mean the unguarded frontier dividing the United States from Canada.

This same factor of language is the most potent of those which hold together the British Empire or, rather, the British Commonwealth of Nations. (A newfangled sort of title is surely appropriate to the most extraordinary political arrangement the world has ever seen.) What, if it is not language, does hold the Commonwealth together? The independence of the Dominions has been acknowledged in the most emphatic terms. There was not one of them, for example, which could not have decided, if it had so chosen, that it would prefer to keep Edward VIII as its King on his own terms.[1] The Treaty of Locarno expressly provides that the obligations therein undertaken by the United Kingdom shall not be binding on the Dominions unless they so will it—and, in fact, not one of them has willed it. Political theorists of the old school look at the British Commonwealth of Nations, rub their eyes and declare, in a bucolic manner, that they do not believe it. But there it is. It believes in its own existence and so does the rest of the world. Nothing can explain it but the possession of a common language.

The feeling of the Englishman toward those of his cousins who live in the Dominions distinguishes them very little from those others who live in the

[1] In one of them, according to some interpretations, he did remain King for a few days longer than in the others.

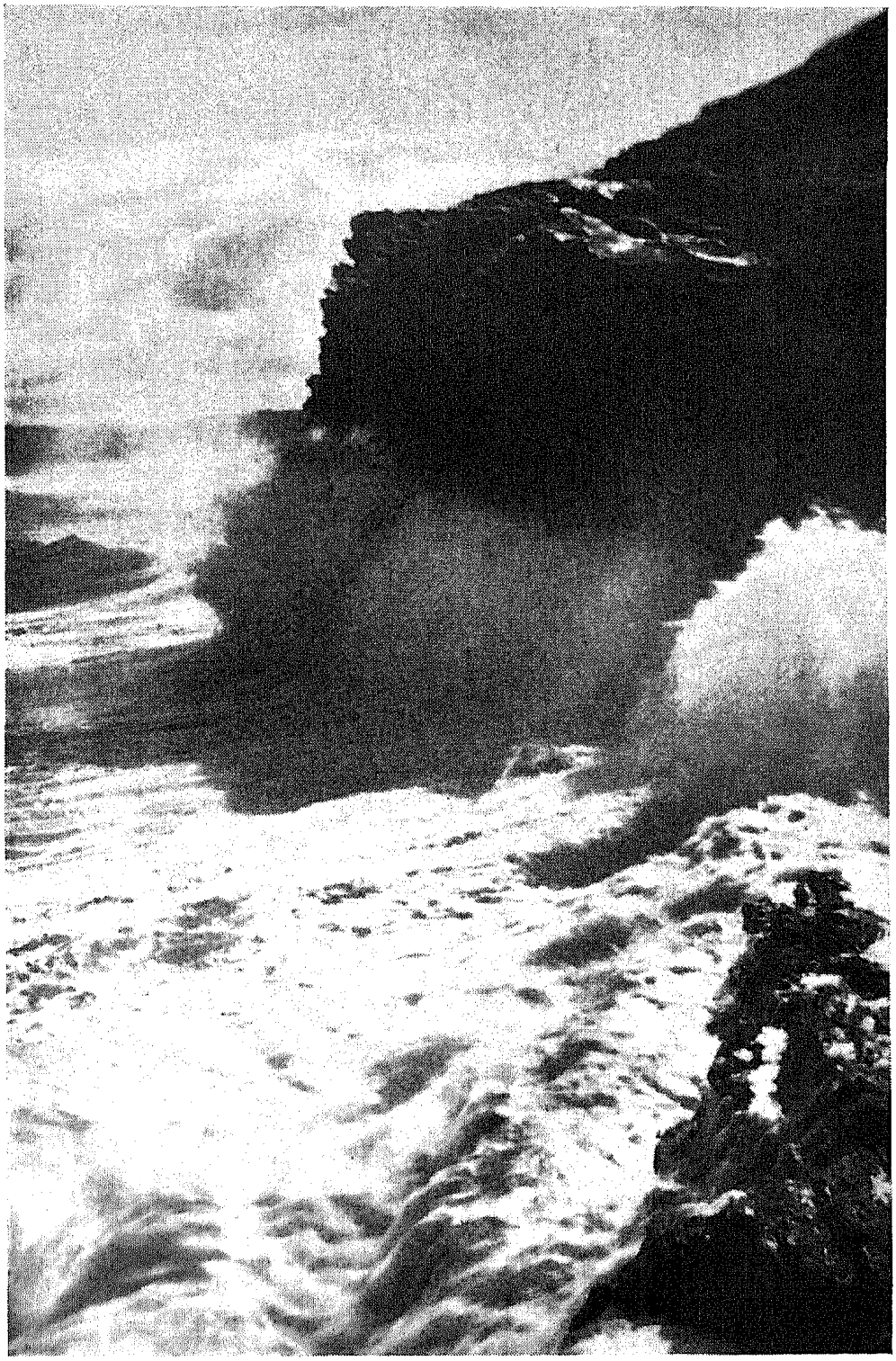
United States. On one point he has to be careful with them. Like the Scots, they are touchy about what they are called. But the Englishman has so long been careful not to call them Colonials that by now it has become second nature. It is easy to understand why their objection was originally raised, but it is a pity that an excellent word should have been so effectively stamped out, more especially since no other has been found to take its place. We are all united in rejecting "Britisher." A prize was once offered for a substitute, but of all the suggestions it evoked none became popular—not "Dominisher," nor even the word which I personally liked better, "Nonsunseton." I propose, after asking everyone to forgive me and to understand why I do it, to call them Colonials.

It would, of course, be untrue to say that we confuse Colonials in our minds with Americans. The Americans are members of the family with whom there was, long ago, one of those family rows which the tactful person will bear in mind even after the shaking of hands. The Colonials are members of the family with whom there has never been any overt breach, even if relations have sometimes been strained. Take the image of a family of sons, where one son quarrels with his parents and walks out and sets up for himself. He prospers, perhaps marries into a different set and develops ways of life different from those of his home. Later there is a reconciliation in which all wounds are healed and all bitternesses forgot-

ten. He comes home for Christmas and frequently for dinner at other times, and his *advice* is sought and expected in difficulties. Meanwhile his brothers have grown up and are, in everything that matters, as independent as he. They earn their own livings and contribute to the upkeep of the joint household. So long as they do so, their father would never think of telling them at what time they should go to bed or get up in the morning. But they are nevertheless more members of the family than the son who has left home, sooner and more confidently called on in an emergency than he.

Such images as these are dangerous, for they lead their user further than he foresees when he begins. But my picture of that family grows more detailed the more I think about it. The son who left home has, as I said, married into a different set and he has raised a large and vigorous family. But some of the others have married too, and have brought their wives into the house, and sometimes friction is the result The French wife of our Canadian son is a pleasant person, who, on the whole, has settled down very well among us. But the Dutch wife of our South African son (or perhaps it should be the Dutch husband of our South African daughter) is a masterful person with ideas that do not always accord with ours.

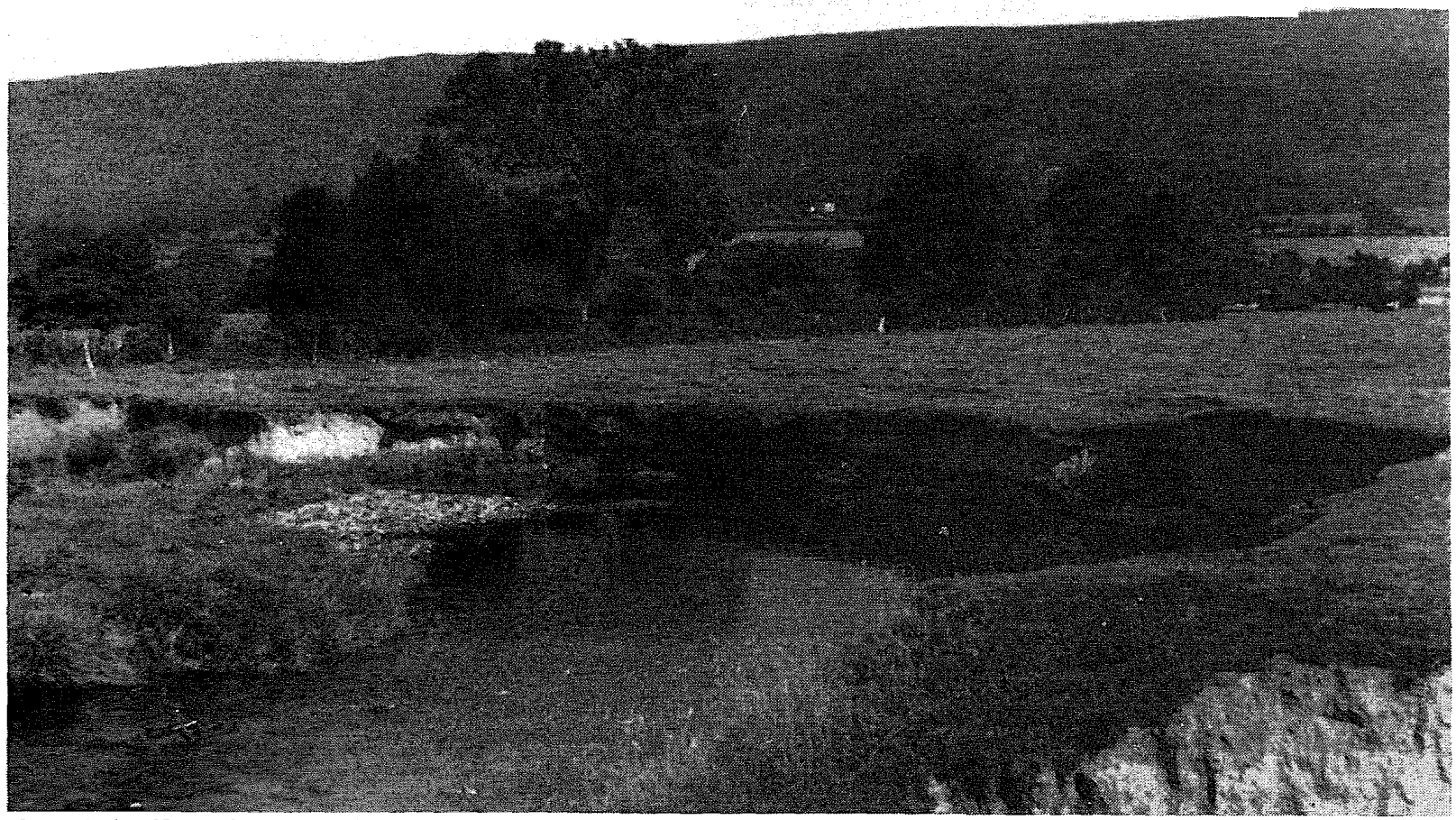
I must abandon imagery before it leads me into serious trouble. And I must say again, and with as much emphasis as I can, that I have not attempted here to look objectively at the position of



Courtesy Cherry Kearton.

AN ENGLISH SEA

"It is at least a tenable theory that the sea has had the last word in making us what we are."



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THE LONG MYND

"The Long Mynd in Shropshire, most delightful of all hills to walk on, was during a whole æon as isolated as Easter Island."

the English among neighbors, foreigners, and cousins. I have sought no more than to discover what the Englishman normally thinks that position to be.

He has a very strong belief in the assimilative powers of his race. He does not, any more than anyone else, very clearly define what he means by "race." But what he does mean, without knowing it, is language. When one comes to think of it, he is justified in thinking the English language a pretty remarkable phenomenon. It springs from a happy marriage between Teutonic and Latin elements—with the advantage that the Latin contribution came from several sources, making it, as it were, a group marriage. It did not recognizably take form until some five hundred odd years ago, and now it is more widely spoken than any tongue of which history has record. It has enabled the jumbled peoples of India to combine, as otherwise they never would have done, to dispute the mastery of their own country with the strangers who taught it to them. Of all the "universal languages" which the pundits have ever proposed, the only one that has ever seemed to have a chance is Mr. C. K. Ogden's "Basic English." [1] And, in its full range, it has one inestimable virtue. Critics sometimes say that, in its blending of different elements, it has fallen between two stools

[1] My only objection to this admirable invention is that it will be very difficult for the English to learn it It is one thing to acquire eight hundred words of another tongue, quite a different thing to remember which, of all the words of one's own tongue, are the eight hundred one is allowed to use

It has neither the capacity for poetic eloquence which exists in some tongues nor the capacity for exact statement which exists in some others The deadly secret of English is that it possesses both capacities in sufficient quantities and can switch from the first to the second with devastating suddenness. This transition is responsible for a good many of the most astonishing high moments in our poetry—and probably for some of our successes in diplomacy.

Now a language is both a picture of the mind of the people that speaks it and an instrument for the further development of that mind. If you learn to speak English you become, even if only to an infinitesimal extent, more like an Englishman than you were. If you make it your habitual speech, we shall know that we can deal with you, saving a certain reserve, as though to all intents and purposes you were an Englishman. If it is the speech that your sons first learn in their nursery, then they will *be* Englishmen and none of us will ever think of disputing it.

Our fundamental attitude to all other inhabitants of the world is that we should like every man jack of them to be English, that is to say, to learn English at their mothers' knees. We do not want to conquer anyone or to oppress anyone or even to rule over anyone. Our final and simple solution of all the problems of humanity is for everyone to be like us. We have, to be sure, certain color prejudices. But they are of late and, at bottom, of accidental origin In India they do

not go back as far as the eighteenth century, where the earlier adventurers recognized a civilization at least as high as their own, even if it might have fallen into decay. They will disappear as rapidly as they arose.

And that is, as near as I can make a picture of it, how the Englishman thinks of his fellow dwellers on the planet A high proportion of them already have English as a native speech, and to them, therefore, he looks with confidence for understanding and cooperation. Many more speak it quite well, and their feet are set on the way. The sooner everybody learns English as his native speech, the better it will be for everybody. In our hearts, we do honestly believe this. It sounds like arrogance, but, even when we suffer from our worst fits of conscience-searching, arrogance is never one of the sins of which we accuse ourselves. What English statesman was ever condemned by national opinion because he was too arrogant toward other countries? Rightly or wrongly, we can put our hands on our hearts and declare that of this we feel ourselves to be innocent. We want to crush no one under our heel. We only want everyone to be English, because our experience has shown us that that is the best thing to be. It is, it must be admitted, a frame of mind that leads to many misunderstandings of the sort that can be exemplified by the following story. A friend of mine once said to me: "My Uncle Walter is in trouble again. I suppose he's been trying to help someone. I don't know how Uncle Walter gets

into these difficulties, but they always follow the same course. He fixes on someone and tries to help him until one day he gets a letter from a firm of solicitors, saying: 'Dear Sir—Unless you will stop helping our client, we shall be obliged to ask the High Court for an injunction'" Our kindness toward other nations leads sometimes to a like result.

X

Omissions and Predictions

So now, as our story approaches its end, I look back and perceive that the beginning of it was rather sketchy, that I have left many important things out of the middle, and also that I have put many things in the wrong places. But, when all is said and done, the title of this book is what it is This is *my* England—as much of it as I have been able to cram between a pair of covers. I have, naturally, no means of telling how many readers have come with me as far as this. I may be like that unhappy cathedral guide, who looks round from the top of the stairs down to the crypt only to find that all the members of his party have tiptoed away, not staying even to press their sixpences into his hand. But, like other cathedral guides, I have at least enjoyed the sound of my own voice. Let me say here that the writing of this book has been a labor and an anxiety, but also a continuous delight. I am still trying to follow the flight of the bees that have been shaken out of my bonnet during the composition.

With all the stronger reason I feel wistful as the moment approaches when I shall no longer be able to write so spaciously about my country. Allow me to delay that moment by saying something

of the subjects which I ought to have mentioned but have neglected. There is no harm in owning now that the first chapter was meant to be a complete survey of English history—but when I had filled my allotted space and had got no further than the reign of King Arthur, I thought that it might be as well to go on to something else. There at least I did get down on paper something of what I believe to be one of the principal English secrets. Then again, soon after that, when I wrote about the English Scene, I wanted to make a picture of the whole country from the rocky peaks of Scawfell to the glades of the New Forest. But not even the New Forest could I include. I meant to tell how I entered it in a car, with two days to spare at the end of a holiday, and went all round it, and through it, and shot out of it, in less than a day, dimly understanding that that was long enough for seeing it in a car, but not a thousandth part of the time that could be profitably devoted to seeing it on foot—or, better still, in the saddle.

I have hardly mentioned the quiet and remote intimacies of Essex, where, after a stormy passage between the Yiddish shop signs in the Mile End Road, you come to villages over which even the Conquest passed with little effect—villages with names like Willingale Spain and Leaden Roding and Shellow Bowells. I did mention St. Peter's-on-the-Wall, the oldest of British churches. I did not say that it is situated in a district to which its inhabitants still commonly refer as "The Hundred"—or that Dengie Hundred is the strong-

hold of the Peculiar People, who, following a text in the New Testament, believe it sinful to rely, in sickness, on anything but prayer, the laying-on of hands, and anointing with oil. When I knew the Hundred well, the leader of the Peculiar People was the local carrier, who always seemed to me to be a pretty formidable character. But for the fear of his eye, doctors might have been summoned at earlier stages of troublesome maladies. Because of the Peculiar People, the clergy of the Church of England in those parts, like their colleagues in Wales, used always to behave as though they were imperiled outposts of the true faith—some of them timorously, some of them arrogantly, according to their natures. When I was a boy I heard a sermon from one of them, asserting that the Church ought to be allowed to punish heretics. I liked it: it had some spirit in it. The other hearers (there were not many of them) thought it would do no good, and I daresay they were right. That district when I last visited it appeared to have changed little since the days before the War, when I knew it well. It is not, however, three hours in a moderately fast car from the center of London.

And the recollection of that sermon makes me wonder whether I can have said enough about the village church and the bells on Sunday. It cannot be disputed that the Church of England is a waning influence in the national life, yet it is still strong and there are memories which are carried on from generation to generation. It is not senti-

mentality to say that if I were dying in a foreign country the bells and the people going past my windows would be among the last things I should remember. They art part of the texture of life in England.

Then again, speaking of the Peculiar People, I am quite sure that I have not said enough about Nonconformity. This is a very English thing. It is made up partly of the particular English genius in religion which has produced John Bunyan and George Fox, as well as George Herbert, and partly of the Englishman's instinctive desire to go out through doors labeled "Entrance" and to come in by doors labeled "Exit" The very word, Nonconformity, reveals a part (though only a part) of the secret. Its negativeness would have made it disheartening to anyone but the Englishman. He, however, exclaimed: "You tell me to *conform?* Like hell I will! I shall call myself a Nonconformist!"—and he suffered all sorts of things in the service of that chilly label A good deal of their vitality left the Nonconformist sects when they began to insist on being called the Free Churches.

Perhaps the most glaring omission is that of my reference to the sport of racing. How could I have left it out? On the other hand, how could I have put it in, since I have been to only three race meetings in my life and was bored to misery at all of them? I do not even back horses, save for that ritual bet on the Derby which every Englishman worthy of the name makes every year.

This is, however, less a gamble than a votive candle on the altar of Saint Horse. But, though I could fill pages with what I have observed of my fellow countrymen when they discuss horse racing, perhaps I had better not draw too much attention to my blind spot, a spot so large that I am never really sure whether the Oaks is a steeplechase or not

Almost as shocking an omission consists in the fact that I have said nothing about the Fighting Services. Yet it would have been easy to write a chapter on the meaning of the difference between Army and Navy. One of them is that until quite recently the naval officer was much more of a technical man than his military brother. So long as his ship was in commission, even in times of peace, he was responsible for the complications of handling and navigation—complications which soon found out the incompetent, even though they did not always mean the end of him. The soldier was exposed to no such tests. The drill he had to teach his men was simple. Battle was a matter of discharging inaccurate muskets and brute-force bayonet work. Beyond this narrow field, all that was asked of the officer was that he should display the quality of "leadership"—which meant that his men should know that he was less afraid of being killed than they were. There was, indeed, not much more that could be asked of him, except original genius in military matters. He was here the more circumscribed, in that, until 1914, we never regarded the Army as a major instrument

of national policy. We have, in the last two centuries, produced three great generals. Clive was a brilliant improviser and leader of irregular forces. Marlborough always commanded composite armies, and so did Wellington in the only action in which his ability was really put to the proof.[1] This was not the best soil in which to grow a great army tradition.

The Navy, on the other hand, has always been our "sure shield." It has played this part so well that there has been no invasion of any consequence since the invention of firearms. And the roll of admirals contains name after name that, for genius and character, brings tears into the eyes. I should say, indeed, that the names of Marlborough and Clive alone, among soldiers, would go into a list of the first six fighting Englishmen, and that one might find some difficulty in pushing Wellington's name into the first dozen.

But the Navy, it must be confessed, "lost face" with a misunderstanding public during the War. It did not sail out of port and win a resounding victory at Trafalgar or Cape St Vincent. The work it did in protecting overseas communications was a routine, day by day job which could never be brought properly home to the imagination of the public. It was, in any case, expected to protect us and was not overmuch praised for doing what it was expected to do.

In these circumstances the Army came to the

[1] Cromwell may have been the greatest of them all, but his battles were on such a miserably small scale that it is impossible to judge.

front as never before. But it had always enjoyed an advantageous position as compared with the Navy in that its leaders spent much of their time at home, in easy touch with the political authorities This, I suppose, is why the Navy got the name of the "Silent Service." Its leaders were so often in places, like Hongkong and Malta, where they were not likely to sit at the same dinner tables as cabinet ministers and important journalists. Since no one could hear them, they were assumed to be mute. But in fact the Navy is anything but silent. Nelson was the most expansive and voluble of men. (It would have been interesting to see him and Napoleon together and to see which of them could first talk the other down.) Nowadays, when an Admiral retires, he begins to bellow like a saurian in a tropical swamp for the blood of some other Admiral. Then the other Admiral answers in tones that shake the leaves of the mangrove trees, and the whole jungle is hushed by the passions of these combative and extremely vocal monsters. Among the reviewers of books on naval subjects the uproar is technically known as "making a noise like an Admiral." By comparison, even Field Marshals speak in whispers.

It may be thought that I am wandering, but in my judgment (if I am still capable of judging anything set down in these pages), I am approaching a relevant point. We have grown so used to reminding ourselves at appropriate moments that we live on an island and that Britannia rules the waves that we are ceasing to attach any exact

meaning to these statements. We are, indeed, growing a little confused about their meaning. Historians tell us that we have developed a great navy because it was necessary for our preservation This is rather like being wise after the event If we had, in spite of the necessity, failed to develop a great navy, the historians would have told us that this failure was the cause of our downfall. There have been nations which have failed to rise to equally obvious necessities. But the sea round our shores has contributed to the development of our national character, and there is, therefore, propriety in our choosing the Navy as one of our main symbols.

Not all Englishmen are seamen, and seamen have been produced by other nations But it is at least a tenable theory that the sea has had the last word in making us what we are. Its influence spread inland from the ring of hardy and enterprising men who were most exposed to it. It has clearly affected all our handling of public affairs. For seamanship is a matter of closely accumulated knowledge, that is to say the piling of small precedent on small precedent, and also of bold and brilliant improvisation when the emergency arises. There is much instinct in it or what looks like instinct. Nelson was no cold scientific organizer of victory: he *felt* what he must do to win his battles. And the same thing is true of any man successfully sailing a small boat in an Essex estuary The winds and the currents and the sky say things to him which he could not trans-

late into any human language, but which he knows how to translate into action. It is little wonder that we talk of "the Ship of State" and that Canning toasted Pitt as "the pilot who weathered the storm." Our best rulers have been those in whom it is possible to detect something that might be called ship sense. I believe that no other nation in the modern world has had it in the same degree as ourselves, except the Scandinavians, who, on account of their small numbers have not been able to demonstrate it to advantage on the same scale —though, of course, the admixture of their blood has helped us in acquiring it. The French have their coasts on the Channel and the Atlantic and they have produced very fine sailors. But they have also land frontiers which have been an effectively distracting influence. And the Mediterranean hardly counts at all in this context. How long was it after Spain emerged from the Mediterranean before she was driven back by the men who were brought up on the shores of the outer seas?

* * *

I hope that it may be apparent by now that I have used the theme of England and the sea largely as a symbol. It becomes more important when we search to find a symbol of the future.

Let us, for this moment, take as literal truth what I have rather fancifully said, that winds, tides, currents, soundings, and the setting and reefing of sails have all played their part in the formation of the national character. But steam and

internal combustion engines are altering all that. Our ships are not the same. Under Elizabeth we defeated the Spaniards because we had specialized in small vessels, which, daringly handled by men with the right instinct, could make rings round their cumbersome opponents. The defeat of the Spanish Armada was not the defeat of a large bully by a small hero: it was a battle between a large herd of cows and a small pack of wolves.

During the opening years of the twentieth century, however, we began to specialize in ships larger than those built by any other country—and no one has yet succeeded in proving that the attempt was well-advised. Kipling spoke of the "war castles" of King Edward VII foaming into their places. This impressive phrase says nearly all of them that there is to be said. The dreadnoughts and the superdreadnoughts, the galleons of our time, hardly went into action at all. They foamed into their places—places where they would not bump into mines and where submarines could not get at them. The best work of the Royal Navy during these years was done by craft more easily comparable in size with those which Drake commanded.

Something of the same sort may be said about the mercantile marine. The captain of a liner can nowadays take his ship from port to port as easily as I walk from here to the club. There is an electrical device which will give him infallible soundings. Wireless messages warn him of the

proximity of icebergs and typhoons. Refrigerating systems will assure him a supply of food in decent condition until the end of the voyage. He has no reason to dread an outbreak of scurvy. His modern hardship is that he is expected to combine with seamanship the qualifications of a hotel manager and yet not to draw a hotel manager's salary. It is no use grumbling about this (except on points of detail), since mechanical improvements have forced it on us.

Now let me reduce to plainer terms what has been so far only an elaborate figure of speech. In the practice of seafaring we find an image of English life—especially in its pragmatical aspect. I do believe that my figure of speech has an objective reality and that the tides round our coasts have done something to make us. But we may leave it at that. On shore we have to face the fact that the steady development of machinery has, for nearly two hundred years, exercised on our national life a pressure which has been steady in force, if shifting in direction.

This book has been written in a hopeful mood. I believe that more machinery will bring us nearer than we have been for a long time to the best things of those old days when there was hardly any at all. I believe that more machinery will enable more people to enjoy those best things. No one, I suppose, will deny that movable types have enabled the populace to enjoy the treasures of literature or that mechanical typesetting has made

it still easier for them. This is but one example. The mass production of bicycles is another. The young men and women who ride on bicycles out of the cities into the country do too often leave behind them under the hedgerows the wrappings of their sandwiches. The answer is that we must all patiently lump it until they have learnt that these are *their* hedgerows and that they look better without bits of grease-proof paper and jettisoned cigaret packages

The question at the end is, whether England, with all her climatic advantages, and all the riches that have been thrown into the stock pot of her inhabitants, can survive this storm of change that has come into the world. To go back to my figure of speech, has she learnt enough from her dealings with the sea to follow her own way now that the requirements of the sea are no longer what they were? We have always been thought a rather queer people, and "queer," in most languages, really means "original." We led the way into the thickets of industrialism, which was an achievement of a sort If there is any justice in the universe, we ought to be the people to find the way out We may have, many of us must have, blood in our bodies which came from that Illyrian legionary, whom, on an earlier page, I have imagined as being a progenitor of King Arthur. The transmitters of his blood have learnt from our sea and our soil what are the particular advantages of being an Englishman It is for them to find the way out. My patriotic boastfulness takes

the limited form of saying that, if it can be found, it will be found here.

* * *

At the end (and this really is the end) we must remember that this land of ours on which we walk, on which we build our houses, over which we scurry in trains and motor cars about our petty affairs, has at times lain for many thousands of years beneath the sea. It has been covered by glaciers, one of which left, in Huntingdonshire, a mere boulder that we call a hill. In some of its ages it has been devastated by volcanoes. We cannot say for certain that there never was a civilization here before that was more highly developed than ours—better roads, say, with more cyclists on more efficient machines, and faster and more beautiful motor cars. The traces of these things might easily be buried far below the feeble scratchings of the geologists.

But we do know for certain that, where today the commercial traveler takes the samples in his ten-horse-power car between London and Brighton, once there moved the rollers of an ocean as lonely as the Pacific. The chalk hills, over which he passes and which he calls the Downs, are made up of what is left of innumerable small creatures who once lived at the bottom of the sea.

The Long Mynd in Shropshire, most delightful of all hills to walk on, was during a whole æon as isolated as Easter Island I wonder whether the Boiling Well was there then. It may have

been, and even, quite likely, the bilberries grew as richly on the western slopes as they do now. But those steep ghylls on the east were only in process of being carved by the rainfall, and they led to no villages where the traveler might rest at night. Once there was no English Channel—once the Thames was a tributary of the Rhine.

We know another thing for certain—that what has happened before will happen again. The crust of the earth, regarded in terms of geological ages, is an unstable thing. If it moves even a little, it can plunge a whole civilization out of sight and, soon after that, out of all recollection. The top of the dome of St. Paul's is not six hundred feet above sea level—a ridiculously narrow margin.

It is on this margin that the glories of our blood and state are founded. I have boasted here of the English and what they are and what they have done. I have boasted about our Shakespeare and our roast beef and our stone walls. There was once a house at Amersham which struck me as a remarkable example of the new spirit and another at Chipping Campden which struck me no less as a proof of the virile persistence of the old. I have written about the Royal Navy and the Merchant Marine as symbols of the national character. I have said something about the methods of W. G. Grace in the cricket field. I have, Heaven forgive me, said a great deal about myself.

It might have been better to say more about the higher and holier monuments of our people. But

here I am with half of a story told, or less, and that in a garbled and fragmentary manner. The rest must happen before it can be told. Yet now, as I come to the final page, I feel like a novelist who pauses because he does not know quite how he will work out the details of his plot, but who knows beyond a doubt the end to which it must come.

As I make ready to put down my pen, it obsesses me, this thought of the end. One day the story will have been told from the first sentence to the last, from the Reign of King Arthur to—what? No matter what, there they will all lie, Chaucer's tomb in Westminster Abbey and Nelson's in St Paul's, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament, fields and villages and cities —there they will all lie, more than five fathoms deep beneath the surface of a quiet or an angry sea, and all the glories of the English, and all their absurdities, will be no more than a memory in the mind of God.

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